



PHD

Re-shaping personhood through neoliberal governmentality: Non-formal education, charities, and youth sport programmes

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Re-shaping personhood through neoliberal governmentality:
Non-formal education, charities, and youth sport programmes

IOANNIS-ALBERT COSTAS BATLLE

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

This PhD research explored how neoliberal governmentality influenced the UK charity SportHelp and its youth sport programmes. Despite charities being significant providers of non-formal education for young people in the UK, there has been limited work exploring how the neoliberal landscape shapes these organisations and their programmes *in practice*. Therefore, this thesis addresses this gap in knowledge by a) furthering the limited literature on charities and their operation, b) providing an empirical illustration of how neoliberal governmentality functions, and c) contributing to the ongoing debate about the purpose of non-formal education in the neoliberal marketplace.

This case study research focused on a single charity – SportHelp – whose remit is to improve socio-economically disadvantaged young people’s lives through the provision of sport. Over a 9-month period, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a selection of SportHelp’s managers, coaches, and young people. Furthermore, participant observations of three coaching sessions (featuring previously interviewed coaches and young people) were undertaken to complement the interviews. The data were subsequently analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings suggest the neoliberal landscape shaped SportHelp and its youth sport programmes profoundly. To maximise its chances of economic survival, SportHelp re-configured itself into a ‘quasi-market’. In doing so, it adopted a deficit-reduction approach towards improving young people’s lives: the charity assumed socio-economically disadvantaged young people were inherently ‘deficient’ (because of their lower socio-economic status) and required ‘fixing’. Using sport, SportHelp coaches ‘fixed’ young people’s personhood by instilling the neoliberal values of individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. These values were readily internalised by young people *because* SportHelp operates in the realm of non-formal education; a space where coaches could foster passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging.

Keywords: Neoliberalism; governmentality; charities; youth sport; socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents; non-formal education.

The research question:

How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?

List of abbreviations

FE – Formal education.

NFE – Non-formal education.

RQ – Research question.

SFG – ‘Sport For Good’.

SED – Socio-economic disadvantage.

SES – Socio-economic status.

YSP – Youth sports programme.

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Introduction

Non-formal education

Non-formal education (NFE) refers to any type of organised education with learning objectives that falls beyond the remit of formal education¹ (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974). As Eshach (2007) summarises, NFE is characterised by being voluntary, frequently fuelled by a learner's intrinsic motivation, and takes place in a space where learning is often not evaluated. Therefore, the range of non-formal activities are exceptionally varied; they span from youth community groups, museums, and sports clubs through to religious gatherings, botanical gardens or rehabilitation support groups. Historically, NFE served a dual purpose, depending on whether it was used in Third World or industrialised nations. In the former, NFE's purpose was to educate youths and adults who had limited access to schools (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974), whilst its remit in the later was to complement formal schooling (La Belle, 1982). However, discussions of non-formal education in Third World countries, or its use with adults are beyond the scope of this thesis. My central concern is with NFE and young people.

Over the last five decades, non-formal education has grown into a "worldwide education industry" (Romi and Schmida, 2009, p. 257). Though this growth slowed down in the 1980s due to the emphasis on schooling as the dominant approach towards learning, NFE has since then experienced a revival (Yasunaga, 2014). For Yasunaga (2014), this revitalisation stems from a combination of four factors: 1) NFE can help educate learners who lack access to or have not completed formal education; 2) NFE is an important part of lifelong learning² and the lifelong learning policy focus many countries are adopting; 3) NFE is used "to develop human capabilities, improve social cohesion and to create responsible future

¹ Formal education encompasses "highly institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured" (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974, p. 8) systems like school or university.

² Lifelong learning refers to an individual's ongoing acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies throughout their life span (Barros, 2012; Biesta, 2006)

citizens” (p. 5); and 4) there are expectations that non-formal education can result in higher social productivity and economic growth. To appreciate the speed at which non-formal education has flourished and established itself as a globally noteworthy form of education, one only needs to look at the comparatively limited scope of NFE 35 years ago:

“It appears safe to argue that the population served by nonformal education programs for children and youth worldwide may be relatively small. Such nonformal education is likely to be used to extend middle and upper class, or dominant group values, and thereby reinforce cultural and structural distances among groups.” (La Belle, 1982, p. 168).

NFE can no longer be described as ‘relatively small’. In the same way Yasunaga (2014) illustrated that non-formal education has burgeoned, Hoppers (2006, p. 15) suggests the “debate on non-formal education is stronger now than it has been since the 1970s”. This proliferation of non-formal education for young people is reflected in a growing body of literature. Research has explored the links between NFE and enhancing both employment (Souto-Otero, 2016; Weyer, 2009) and awareness about health issues (Pais, Rodrigues and Menezes, 2014), as well as exploring how NFE spaces can be valuable learning sites (Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi, 2015; Re’em, 2001).

La Belle’s previous observation about non-formal education predominantly being enjoyed by “middle and upper class” groups retains a degree of truth, as Souto-Otero (2016) indicates. I say ‘a degree of truth’ because provision of NFE for disadvantaged, vulnerable, or ‘at-risk’ youth has also flourished. Examples of such initiatives span across extra-curricular activities (Mahoney and Cairns, 1997), sport interventions (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom and Coalter, 2012) or youth movements to combat violence (Ardizzone, 2003). What underpins these non-formal education programmes is that the stated goal is to improve young people’s lives by meeting their needs (Ardizzone, 2003; Coombs and Ahmed, 1974; Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi, 2015; Romi and Schmida, 2009; Russell, 2001; Souto-Otero, 2016; Weyer, 2009;

Yasunaga, 2014). Though there are many providers of NFE for socio-economically disadvantaged young people in the UK, one institution stands out given its breadth and popularity: youth charities.

Youth charities as key providers of non-formal education

The history of charities in England and Wales³ can be traced back to the fourteenth century (Alvey, 1995). From the medieval age to now-a-days, the purpose of charity has evolved from a means of personal salvation (maximising one's chances of entering heaving) to supporting and improving people's lives. What constitutes 'improvement' is demarked by thirteen 'charitable purposes' outlined within the Charities Act (2011), such as the "the prevention or relief of poverty", the "advancement of citizenship or community development", or "the advancement of amateur sport" (p. 2). Though the 'golden age' of charity and philanthropy is considered to have taken place during the 19th century, the charity sector has nevertheless "become a formidable presence in British society and politics and an economic powerhouse in its own right" (Hilton et al., 2012, p. 31)⁴.

The extent to which the role of charities has burgeoned within English and Welsh society is noticeable by looking at the seismic increase in the amount of money charities receive as income. In 1992, there were over 170,000 registered charities with an estimated income of £17 billion (Alvey, 1995). In the in the 25 years between 1992 and 2017, whilst the number of charities has 'only' increased by approximately 13,000⁵, the total income charities received has quadrupled from £17 billion to £74 billion (Charity Commission, 2017). As a 'formidable presence' in an increasingly neoliberal English and Welsh society, the importance and value of charities remains crucial:

³ There are different bodies which govern charities in England and Wales; Scotland; and Ireland.

⁴ To the point that there may be too many charities doing the same work (Green, 2014).

⁵ As of 31 March 2017, there are 183,153 registered charities in England and Wales (Charity Commission, 2017).

“As the role and cost of the ‘welfare state’ are challenged, it is likely that charity will play an increasingly active role in many aspects of society. [...] But charity has been in existence for thousands of years, and perhaps remains a basic human instinct – its long history suggests that charity will be able to cope with fresh and varied demands, and to carry out a key role in the future.” (Alvey, 1995, p. 62).

Of the 183,000 registered charities, over half of them – 94,000⁶ – are youth charities. These youth charities, by fulfilling at least one of thirteen ‘charitable purposes’⁷, offer spaces which are voluntary to join and where learning is usually not evaluated. Said differently, youth charities provide spaces for non-formal education. As Romi and Schmida (2009, p. 266) outline:

“Non-formal educational settings are more flexible and less structured than those of formal education. Therefore they can provide a safe and secure place for adolescents to experiment with their freedom and experience steps toward independence and adulthood without necessarily facing the retributions of the more confining formal educational system. NFE aims, to a great extent, to help adolescents cope with their struggle toward forming their personal identity. During the years of adolescence, youngsters go through changes in a wide variety of areas, and must cope with a multitude of developmental tasks, among them individuation, forming their personal and social identity, and learning to reach autonomous decisions regarding their future.”

Youth charities are in a position in which they can capture the interest and attention of young people in a manner that formal education (like school) may not be able to. This is not only because of the types of activities charities provide (like sport or art – activities which are generally more appealing to

⁶ According to an advanced search on the Register of Charities carried out on 12/06/2017 where the ‘Classification’ field was set to “Search charities by ‘201 CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE’”.

⁷ Such as the aforementioned ‘prevention or relief of poverty’ or ‘advancement of citizenship or community development’.

young people than classroom-based learning); it is also down to the educational approach of non-formal education. Relationships between adults and young people are less hierarchical and more egalitarian (Madjar and Cohen-Malayev, 2013) as well as caring (Russell, 2001). Furthermore, youth charities' goals and methods are more emergent (based on young people's needs) than they are pre-planned (like in school) (Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi, 2015).

Consequently, the 94,000 youth charities in England and Wales are key providers of non-formal education for young people. More specifically, the bulk of these charities aim to help youths who need additional support because of disabilities, ethnic minority exclusion, or socio-economic disadvantage. My thesis is concerned with one of these populations: socio-economically disadvantaged young people. In exploring charities' provision of non-formal education for adolescents' from lower socio-economic backgrounds, this PhD aims to understand *how* charities support youths within a neoliberal, post-welfare state context. In doing so, this study contributes to one of the central debates about non-formal education: does NFE advance social justice, or enforce social control?

Youth charities and non-formal education: social justice or social control?

What is the role of non-formal education? How does it help young people? Despite the widespread growth of non-formal education since the 1960s, these questions are still at the forefront of academic research (Mills and Kraftl, 2014). According to Hoppers (2006, pp. 15-16):

"It is significant that there is now, more than ever before in the history of non-formal education, an interest in the programmatic and socio-political location of non-formal education within the wider totality of (basic) education provisions: Whom do the initiatives serve? With what degree of legitimacy? Under whose control? With what distinctive approaches and methodologies? And for what purposes?"

Hoppers' emphasis on the socio-political location of non-formal education is crucial. Considering the UK is a neoliberal society (Peck and Tickell, 2007; Peck and Tickell, 2012), we need to make sense of Hoppers' questions *in relation to* a neoliberal socio-political context. Furthermore, not only do we need to ask questions about the role of non-formal education, we also need to ask those same questions about the providers of NFE. What is the purpose of youth charities who support socio-economically disadvantaged young people? How do such charities shape young people's notions of citizenship? Could it be that charities, though hoping to advance social justice, may unwittingly be enacting social control? These are the types of questions this thesis addresses.

To answer these questions, I conducted a case study of a UK charity: SportHelp. SportHelp are a medium-sized charity⁸ who use sport to improve socio-economically disadvantaged young people's lives. This use of sport as a vehicle to aid young people's development is popular for various reasons. Firstly, it is considered a 'hook' capable of capturing the interest of youth (Coatsworth and Conroy, 2007; Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth, 2005; Sherry, Schulenkorf and Chalip, 2015). Secondly, the rhetoric and narratives around the 'healing power of sport' are widespread and pervasive, leading to assumptions about the inherent virtues of sport as a tool to positively impact on vulnerable young people's lives (Coalter, 2007b; Houlihan, Bloyce and Smith, 2009; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom and Coalter, 2012; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom and Skille, 2014). Therefore, my thesis aims to answer the following research question:

How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?

⁸ In 2015/2016 they worked with over 7,600 young people.

Thesis outline

I have addressed my research question and how it relates to the wider debate about non-formal education throughout six chapters. Following this Introduction chapter, the Literature Review provides the theoretical backdrop to my research by unpacking the four key areas of my project: neoliberalism, UK charities, socio-economically disadvantaged young people's needs, and youth sport programmes. This chapter also highlights the theoretical framework underpinning my thesis: governmentality (Foucault, 2008). This refers to the social and political forces that guide our behaviours and attitudes as individuals; the forces that shape the 'conduct of conduct' (Rose, 2000).

In the Methodology, I outline my critical realist philosophical stance and provide an account of the interviews and observations I carried out at SportHelp over a 9-month period. My sample consisted of three groups of actors within the charity: managers, coaches, and young people. In addition to interviewing individuals from those groups, I also conducted observations of coaches and young people in basketball and table tennis sport sessions.

The Results chapter is devoted to outlining my results. I conducted theoretical thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) on the interviews and, once I had identified my 11 themes, used these as a lens to thematically analyse my observation field notes. I present the data in four groupings: the first addresses how the neoliberal landscape shaped the change and continuity of SportHelp, whilst the remaining three outline the managers', coaches', and young people's perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes.

The Discussion chapter draws together the data in the results chapter to look at the 'bigger picture'. As a result of neoliberal influence, SportHelp re-shaped itself into an enterprise and 'quasi-market'. In doing so, the charity adopted a deficit-reduction approach towards helping socio-economically disadvantaged young people; an approach rooted in 'fixing' the *assumed* 'deficiencies' in these adolescents. This 'fixing' process entailed instilling the values of 'good' personhood in youths: individual

responsibility, discipline, and life skills. To re-configure adolescents into such neoliberal citizens, the charity relied on sport and the coaches' role as someone who could harness the power of sport to 'fix' young people's personhood. Young people readily re-sculpted their personhood to align with the emphasis on individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills, however, this internalisation occurred in great part *because* SportHelp operate in the realm of non-formal education. Since coaches managed to meet young people's needs by fostering passion for a sport, the development of caring relationships, and encouraging adolescents to feel a sense of belonging, young people *wanted* to adopt their coaches' teachings. They *wanted* to become 'good' people who were responsible, disciplined, and modelled particular life skills.

Finally, in the Conclusion I summarise the answer to my research question as well as clarifying the key 'take home' messages. I also address the wider implications of my research by illustrating how it advances the debate about the purpose of non-formal education. Furthermore, I provide a series of recommendations, consider the limitations of my project, and propose avenues for further research.

Literature review

Introduction

As I outlined in the Introduction chapter, one of the central debates in the non-formal education literature consists in exploring what non-formal education is *for*. My thesis contributes to that debate by examining the provision of non-formal education by the UK charity SportHelp. Specifically, I looked at SportHelp's youth sport programmes and how the charity worked to improve the lives of socio-economically disadvantaged young people. However, youth sport programmes (as a type of non-formal education activity) do not simply 'happen'; they are shaped by political contexts and processes (Coakley, 2011A; Spaaij, 2009). In the case of the UK, the dominant socio-political paradigm is neoliberalism. Therefore, the purpose of my work was to answer the following question:

How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?

To answer this question, I took an interdisciplinary approach which embraced psychology, sociology, politics, and educational theory. This holistic approach enabled me to make sense of the multifaceted reality my question aimed to 'tap into'. Therefore, my literature review outlines key ideas, theories, and concepts of four areas: neoliberalism, UK charities, socio-economically disadvantaged young people and their needs, and youth sport programmes.

The first section, neoliberalism, addresses what neoliberalism is and illustrates how neoliberal governmentality governs our lives. Secondly, I unpack what constitutes a UK charity as well as depicting how neoliberal governmentality has re-configured charities into 'quasi-markets'. Thirdly, I conceptualise socio-economic disadvantage and clarify what it means to be an 'adolescent'. In doing so, I demonstrate how the current UK neoliberal policy context has re-configured disadvantage from a *social* issue into an *individual* problem. Here I also conceptualise human needs as a useful tool to understand how non-formal education can support disadvantaged young people. The fourth section of this chapter is devoted to youth

sport programmes and how their purpose has been re-sculpted by neoliberal governmentality. I conclude the chapter by restating my research question and justifying its importance.

Neoliberalism

“The outstanding feature of the post-welfare state is the policy and practice of converting the political nature of social problems into problems of individuals – ‘the individualisation of the social.’”

(Jamrozik, 2009, p. 312)

Jamrozik uses the term ‘post-welfare state’ to describe the changes the welfare state has undergone since the 1980s. At the core of these changes is the replacement of a social security system which spans ‘from the cradle to the grave’ for policies that aim to produce responsible citizens (Larner, 2000b). In this new ‘post-entitlement welfare state’ there is a shift from the “right to ‘welfare’” to the “obligation to ‘workfare’” (Wacquant, 2009, p. 43), underscoring the emphasis placed on the individual to work hard and climb the socio-economic ladder. Thus, the post-welfare state constitutes a project about “converting the political nature of social problems into problems of individuals” (Jamrozik, 2009, p. 312). This re-sculpting of society is attributed to the proliferation of neoliberal values and policies. However, neoliberalism is a diffuse and intangible construct, one that cannot be simply reduced to *just* ‘individualising the social’. Therefore, my aim in this section is to shed light on what neoliberalism is and how it governs our lives through ‘technologies’ which shape the ‘conduct of conduct’ (Rose, 2000).

What is neoliberalism?

Neoliberalism – depending on who you ask – can be understood as a policy framework, a hegemonic ideology, or viewed through the lens of governmentality (Larner, 2000A). Originating in the 1970s as a reaction to Keynesian welfare (Palley, 2005), by the 1990s neoliberalism asserted itself as one of the dominant ideologies in the Western world (Steger and Roy, 2010). Generally considered the antithesis to Marxism, neoliberalism is commonly associated to political leaders such as Augusto Pinochet, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.

Neoliberalism is an abstract and messy concept (Thorsen, 2010) which has been studied and documented in a plethora of ways. In addition to Larner's (2000A) three approaches, Hilgers (2011) also identifies three ways to understand neoliberalism: cultural, structural, and through governmentality. For Wacquant (2012) there are only two approaches (the 'market rule' and governmentality), whereby he suggests neoliberalism should be understood as a mid-point which combines aspects of the 'market rule' and governmentality. Collier (2012), in a further attempt to disentangle neoliberalism, questions whether it should be studied as a macro-structure (a 'big Leviathan') or whether we "rather analyse neoliberalism as though it were the same size as other things, and trace its associations with them" (p. 186). Navigating the academic minefield of neoliberalism is further complicated by the realisation that it is rare to come across self-proclaimed 'neoliberal'. This means the term has mostly been appropriated by critics rather than proponents, which, in turn, has meant 'neoliberalism' has frequently been reduced to a synonym for 'any negative effect caused by the free market' (Boas and Gans-Morse, 2009; Thorsen, 2010).

The tenets of neoliberalism are built upon the foundations of classical liberalism, a socio-economic philosophy which emerged in the 16th and 17th centuries (Carr, 2016A). 'Classical liberalism', according to Ryan (2007, p. 362),

“focuses on the idea of limited government, the maintenance of the rule of the law, the avoidance of arbitrary and discretionary power, the sanctity of private property and freely made contracts, and the responsibility of individuals for their own fates.”

The emergence of these liberal values constituted a reaction to the rule of absolutist and totalitarian states. Thinkers such as John Locke and Adam Smith promulgated notions of individual freedom and private property (Locke, 1689) as well as outlining the free market: a structure where labour, contracts, and items could be exchanged with minimal government interference (Smith, 1776). As these liberal values gained traction and flourished, some of the tenets of ‘classical liberalism’ paved the way for ‘modern liberalism’ Ryan (2007). Associated to thinkers like John Stuart Mill, ‘modern liberalism’ roughly sits in the centre of the political continuum, to the left of ‘classical liberalism’ (Thorsen, 2010) by endorsing

“the view that it is a proper task for the state to secure an expanded freedom for individuals by ensuring that they are not ‘enslaved’ by poverty, drink, unemployment, or having to work in inhuman conditions” (Ryan, 2007, p. 364).

Where ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ liberalism align is in their defence of individual freedom (Ryan, 2007). Whilst ‘classical’ liberals uphold freedom from government intervention, ‘modern’ liberals are not averse to governments re-distributing resources if it leads to individuals being free from “poverty, drink [or] unemployment”. However, despite ‘modern’ liberals accepting a degree of state re-distribution – the welfare state⁹ – they do not champion the welfare state with the fervour that socialists do (Barr, 2012).

The distinction between ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ liberalism matters because the proliferation of ‘classical’ liberalism evolved into ‘modern’ liberalism, which in turn underpinned the 25 years following World War II (Palley, 2005; Peck and Tickell, 2007). This period was characterised by Keynesian welfare

⁹ The welfare state refers to the state’s activities in relation to “cash benefits; health care; education; and food, housing, and other welfare services” (Barr, 2012, p. 8).

economics and, in the UK specifically, the development of a welfare state guided by Beveridge (Barr, 2012). However, during the mid-1970s, Keynesian economics came under fire as a result of rising unemployment, high inflation, a drop in profitability, and mounting amounts of public expenditure leading to government deficits (Saad-filho and Johnston, 2005). The response to the apparent failures of the welfare state and 'modern' liberalism was the revival of a more extreme version of 'classical' liberalism (Saad-filho and Johnston, 2005; Lazzarato, 2009); a version that advocated a post-welfare society: *neoliberalism*.

The origins of *neoliberalism*, or 'new' liberalism, are often traced to the 1970s Chicago School academics like Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek. Reacting to the collapse of Keynesianism (Peck and Tickell, 1994), the core tenets of classical liberalism (individual freedom and a free market untarnished by government regulation) evolved into a more extreme version of liberalism. In addition to promoting humankind's right to exchange private property and services, neoliberalism encourages "ruthless competitive individualism" (Giroux, 2005, p. 8). This shift, from exchange to competition, is particularly noteworthy in so far as it has redefined what it means to be a human being in the 21st century:

"What is more important for us is the way in which this shift in "anthropology" from "homo-economicus" as an exchanging creature to a competitive creature, or rather as a creature whose tendency to compete must be fostered, entails a general shift in the way which human beings make themselves and are made subjects" (Read, 2009, p. 28).

Therefore, as Thorsen (2010) clarifies, neoliberalism "is certainly not a revival of liberalism in general. It is, rather, a revival of a particularly extreme version of economic liberalism" (p. 207). Put bluntly, neoliberalism is "classical liberalism on steroids" (C. Brown, 2015, personal communication). Harvey (2005) offers an extensive and informative summary of neoliberalism which captures the emphasis on individual responsibility, the free market, and competition:

“Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit” (p. 2).

As Harvey (2005) identifies, neoliberalism operates on the premise that human well-being is best advanced within a free market framework. This is what Carr (2016A, p. 1) describes as “placing an economic logic at the centre of social, cultural, and political life”. This ‘economic logic’ thrives on unrestricted competition, in turn driven by supply and demand. Lorenz (2012, p. 601) captures this free market dogma with the following formula:

“free market = competition = best value for money = optimum efficiency for individuals as both consumers and owners of private property”.

Akin to how the animal kingdom regulates itself through survival of the fittest, the market should be free of any external force (such as the state) attempting to shape, stunt or constrain its development

(Davies and Bansel, 2007). Just like the strongest animal in the jungle survives at the expense of weakest, stronger components within the market prevail whilst weaker constituents perish. This is what Peck and Tickell (1994) dub the 'jungle law' of neoliberalism: "a regulatory expression of capitalism's predatory, and ultimately self-destructive, dynamic" (p. 320). Thus, the free market paradigm establishes a 'survival of the fittest' doctrine where 'fitness' and 'strength' is determined by succeeding in the eyes of the market through the accumulation of financial capital (Rose and Miller, 2010).

For this 'jungle law' to thrive, the state must safeguard the market's freedom through provision of military, police or legal structures that defend the right to individual property (Harvey, 2005). Further steps taken by the state, as Palley (2005) highlights, include de-regulation (minimising bureaucratic red-tape that would otherwise control the market's activity) and privatisation (transferring ownership of government run public services, such as transport or health, into the hands of privately controlled organisations). Put succinctly, "neoliberalism imagines the market as the inner regulator of the state rather than the state as the external regulator of the market" (Peck & Tickell, 2007, p. 3). The outcome of implementing the free market paradigm is the transformation of society into an 'enterprise society' (Lazzarato, 2009, p. 121):

"The reform of social policy must not only promote the growth of the enterprise and the universalisation of the idea of enterprise, it must transform its own services into enterprises, into sites of accumulation and profit; as Kessler as put it: 'in the future, all social dispositifs must pass through the screen of economic rationality.'"

To compete for resources in an 'enterprise society', people, organisations, and institutions must re-configure themselves according to 'economic rationalities'. Even in the case of sectors that do not naturally lend themselves to 'economic rationalities' (like health, education, or charities), everyone and everything must *become* markets. In doing so, all aspects of society emerge as resources that can be bought, sold, and traded.

In addition to championing the ‘jungle law’ free market paradigm, the other key aspect about neoliberalism which Harvey (2005) advanced in his earlier, lengthy quote, is the importance of individual freedom and responsibility. Akin to how the state should refrain from imposing constraints on the market, the government should not hamper citizen’s freedom by inflicting on them the burdens of the welfare state. These ‘burdens’ constitute spending on social support and promoting equality of opportunity (Briggs, 1961), or, as Keynes (architect of the previously discussed Keynesian economics) put it

“A system where we can act as a community organised towards achieving common ends and promote social and economic justice whilst respecting and protecting the individual: his freedom of choice, his faith, his thoughts and expression, his spirit of enterprise and his wealth” (Keynes, 1939, cited in Lazzarato, 2009).

When leaders like Thatcher, Reagan and Pinochet sought to reduce the welfare state in the 1970s and 1980s, they did so under the rhetoric of promoting individual choice and responsibility. Thatcher (1987) popularly encapsulated this notion when she claimed that “there is no such thing as society, there are individual men and women and there are families” (p. 10). Therefore, the ‘responsible’ citizen is he or she whose ambition is to accumulate wealth by making choices which ascribe to the free market’s values (Brown, 2003). The neoliberal ‘logic’ is simple: the free market – like the animal kingdom – offers a level playing field, where anybody can succeed *if* they work hard enough and make the ‘right’ choices.

However simple the neoliberal ‘logic’ may be, it is far from flawless. Neoliberalism largely disregards the notion that a person’s situation is shaped by factors beyond individual choice, and it fails to realise that not everyone has the same amount, type, or access to opportunities (Sugarman, 2015). By disregarding the influence context has on a person’s outcomes, those individuals who ‘fail’ to make the ‘right’ choices are chastised for their failure to embrace their agency and improve the financial, health or educational components of their lives (Kendall, 2003; Coakley, 2011A). Consequently, neoliberal rhetoric

rationalises poverty one-dimensionally as a personal failure to embrace the work ethic required to climb out of despondency (Harvey, 2007). In doing so, the emphasis on individual responsibility results in the ‘individualisation of the social’. To re-invoke Jamrozik’s (2009, p. 312) quote at the start of this chapter, neoliberalism is the

“policy and practice of converting the political nature of social problems into problems of individuals – ‘the individualisation of the social.’”

Thus far, what I have outlined in this chapter is an overview of what neoliberalism is. As the outcome of a particularly extreme revival of classical liberalism in the 1970s and 1980s, the core of the neoliberal doctrine is characterised by competition, individual responsibility, and the re-organisation of society in accordance with the free market paradigm (Saad-filho and Johnston, 2005; Peck and Tickell, 2007). People, organisations and institutions must re-configure themselves into both markets and resources that can be sold or bought. Furthermore, by upholding individual freedom and responsibility, neoliberalism ‘individualises the social’ by ignoring contextual factors and instead determines social ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in relation to the choices people make. In short, neoliberalism is an ethereal entity which governs our lives; one that is seemingly everywhere but intangible to grasp:

“Many commentators were taken aback by the speed with which neoliberalism ‘jumped the barrier’, coming to dominate not only the politics of nations such as Britain and the United States, but also of key international organisations” (Gammon, 2012, p. 518).

The next two sections will focus on how neoliberalism governs our lives. Firstly, I will conceptualise neoliberalism as governmentality, and will subsequently explore how the ‘technologies’ of neoliberal governmentality shape society by exerting government ‘at a distance’ (Rose, 2000).

Neoliberalism as governmentality

At the start of the previous section ('what is neoliberalism'), I outlined Larner's (2000A) three conceptualisations of neoliberalism: as a political framework, as a hegemonic ideology, and as governmentality. Larner (2000A) argues that appreciating the differences between these three conceptualisations is not just an academic exercise; our interpretation of neoliberalism is tied to how we study it. The first conceptualisation, neoliberalism as an economic and political framework, resonates with Harvey's (2005, pp. 6-7) interpretation:

"Rather than formulating policies to ensure full employment and an inclusive social welfare system, governments are now focused on enhancing economic efficiency and international competitiveness."

However, this understanding of neoliberalism fails to capture how neoliberalism has become a widely accepted force which governs our lives. Larner (2000A) suggests envisaging neoliberalism as an ideology may partially explain this pervasiveness. This interpretation is more 'sociological' in that it encompasses analyses of institutions, organisations, and processes. Underlying these analyses is hegemony (Bates, 1975) and how neoliberalism constitutes a top-down 'force' which permeates all spheres of society. Despite the value of conceptualising neoliberalism as a political framework or hegemonic ideology, my work is concerned with neoliberalism as governmentality.

Neoliberalism as governmentality is rooted in the ideas of Foucault's lectures at the College de France, 1978 – 1979. By governmentality, Foucault (2008) refers to the social and political forces that guide our behaviours and attitudes as individuals. More specifically, *neoliberal* governmentality refers to the social and political forces that guide our behaviours and attitudes as individuals *in relation to free market values*. These free market values – "interest, investment and competition" (Read, 2009, p. 29) – are at the heart of how people are governed and govern themselves. Instead of predominantly being

shaped by laws and rights, individuals in a neoliberal context rationalise what it means to be a human being in relation to entrepreneurship (Foucault, 2008) and free market values.

The study of neoliberalism as governmentality has grown in recent years (Hilgers, 2011) as an alternative to the view of neoliberalism as a hegemonic ideology. Whilst hegemony and governmentality share common ground (for instance, they are both concerned with how the invisible hand of neoliberalism has re-shaped political thought and individual subjectivities), the two approaches differ in one key area. The hegemonic view conceives neoliberalism as a top-down force (Saad-filho and Johnston, 2005) which in turn infiltrates all aspects of society. Contrarily, the governmentality approach assumes that there is no single, monolithic, interpretation of neoliberalism:

“There are different configurations of neo-liberalism, and that close inspection of particular neo-liberal political projects is more likely to reveal a complex and hybrid political imaginary, rather than a straightforward implementation of a unified and coherent philosophy” (Larner, 2000A, p. 12).

This distinction between neoliberalism as hegemonic ideology and neoliberalism as governmentality is echoed by Wacquant (2012, p. 70):

“There is not one big-N Neoliberalism but an indefinite number of small-n neoliberalisms born of the ongoing hybridisation of neoliberal practices and idea with local conditions and forms.”

At the core of the ‘indefinite number of small-n neoliberalisms’ is a set of techniques of governance, also called ‘technologies’ or ‘rationalities’. According to Rose (1996, p. 88), these ‘technologies’ refer to “characteristic ways in which practices are organised to produce certain outcomes in terms of human conduct”. In the case of neoliberal governmentality, specific practices are combined to shape human conduct *in relation to the free market paradigm*. Consequently, these rationalities refer to how

“Principles of optimisation, technologies of subjectivity and subjection, and elements usually linked to citizenship, such as nation, territoriality and rights, are combined and recombined in accordance with market forces.” (Hilgers, 2011, p. 359).

There are three aspects which make neoliberal governmentality particularly effective. Firstly, neoliberal technologies do not operate through aggressive coercion¹⁰; they instead operate by governing ‘at a distance’ (Rose, 2000). As such,

“Neoliberal governmental technologies are indirect: setting targets and monitoring outcomes; transforming the ethos of governance from bureaucracy to business; giving autonomy to act as long as they are accountable; and creating calculable spaces to monitor outcomes (relying heavily on auditing, targets, and rankings). [...] Governmental technologies help construct neoliberal subjectivity” (Peck & Tickell, 2007, pp. 3-4).

Secondly, neoliberal rationalities can be decontextualized from their sources and re-contextualised in their destination (Ong, 2006). In Darwinian terms, this means neoliberalism has endured (and thrived) *because* of its adaptability (Peck and Tickell, 2012). By mutating and proliferating, neoliberalism has (so far) been impervious to self-created disasters which would have otherwise resulted in its demise, such as the 2008 economic crisis¹¹. Thirdly, neoliberalism survives because it presents itself as the sole form of governance, it suggests there is no alternative to neoliberalism’s “regime of truth” (Read, 2009, p. 28). This is precisely what makes neoliberal governmentality insidious: neoliberal values have become commonplace inconspicuously; the market has become the default setting (Ball, 2000; Lorenz, 2012; Rose, 2000). The ‘logic’ of neoliberalism is now so ordinary it is largely unquestioned.

¹⁰ In the way that a totalitarian regime can be coercive by violently forcing people behave in particular manners.

¹¹ Neoliberalism’s endurance can be partly explained through the example of audit. Audit is spectacularly resilient to its own failure because, when it does fail, instead of challenging the role of audit itself, people tend to demand more of it! (Power, 1994).

Technologies of neoliberal governmentality

Having outlined neoliberalism as governmentality, I now illustrate how the 'governmental technologies' Peck & Tickell (2007) alluded to in the previous paragraph shape our lives. Fundamentally, these technologies, or 'rationalities', affect us by providing

"a mentality of government, a conception of how authorities should use their power in order to improve national well-being, the ends they should seek, the evils they should avoid, the means they should use, and, crucially, the nature of the persons upon whom they must act" (Rose, 1996, p. 153).

I will address two technologies of neoliberal governmentality: New Public Management and responsibilisation. After unpacking them and outlining the effect they have on social institutions and human beings, I will briefly discuss why the conceptualisation of neoliberalism as governmentality is a suitable context for my research. Before exploring the technologies of New Public Management and responsibilisation, it is fundamental to note that these rationalities of governing are *not* neutral. As I have already mentioned, governmentality shapes people, organisations, and structures through specific processes (Larner and Butler, 2005). Therefore, the neoliberal view of human beings as competitive entrepreneurs is only *one* interpretation of what it *means* to be human:

"'The market is in human nature' is the proposition that cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged; in my opinion, it is the most crucial terrain of ideological struggle in our time." (Jameson, cited in Read, 2009, p. 26).

New Public Management

The practices of New Public Management (NPM) emerged in the 1980s with the aim of reorganising the public sector in the image of businesses and business methods (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994). By replacing the emphasis on policy for management, NPM promotes cost-effectiveness, quantification, output targets, limited-time contracts, and accountability (Bevir et al., 2003; Bovaird & Loffler, 2009). According to Dent and Barry (2004, cited in Lorenz, 2012, p. 608), NPM consists of six processes:

“(1) increasing the breakup of public sector organisations into separately managed units, (2) increasing competition to use management techniques from the private sector, (3) increasing emphasis on discipline and sparing use of resources, (4) more hands-on management, (5) introduction of measurable indicators of performance, and (6) use of predetermined standards to measure output.”

The rationale behind these practices, as I advanced earlier in the literature review, is to transform all aspects of society into a ‘market’ and ‘enterprise’ (Harvey, 2005; Lazzarato, 2009). However, the term ‘market’ is not the most suitable for the public sector given it encompasses institutions (schools, healthcare, or charities) which inherently differ from conventional ‘markets’ or businesses. Instead, NPM re-shapes the public sector into ‘quasi-markets’. They are ‘markets’ because they “replace monopolistic state providers with competitive independent ones” (Le Grand, 1991, p. 1259) and they are ‘quasi’ because the public sector may neither be privately owned, nor does it aim to maximise its profits (Le Grand, 1991).

The transformation of the public sector into quasi-markets illustrates the neoliberal technology of NPM in action. As Kelly (2007, p. 1008) notes, “UK public sector organisations were urged to adopt management methods from the private sector”. The term ‘urged’ captures how NPM is a practice which operates ‘at a distance’ (Rose, 2000). By promoting the assumption that society is best served when it

operates under a free market paradigm (Lorenz, 2012), the public sector re-configured itself. As I alluded to previously, this re-configuration was not overtly coercive; instead, the public sector came to understand that if they wanted to survive in the neoliberal marketplace, they need to play by the 'rules' of the marketplace. This entailed embracing NPM and re-shaping public institutions to align with target-setting practices, quantification, and cost-efficiency. Thus, NPM, as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, re-sculpted what it means to be a 'good' public sector organisation. 'Bad' organisations (such as those which failed to set targets, or failed to meet them) would see their funding cut (MacKinnon, 2000), whilst 'good' domains of the public sector which met (or exceeded) their targets would be financially rewarded. Under these conditions, it is easier to appreciate why Peck and Tickell (1994) dubbed neoliberalism a 'jungle law': in a dog-eat-dog world, the strongest survive and the weakest perish.

How does the neoliberal technology of NPM govern our lives? What does it look like in practice? In the case of social work, NPM attempts to reduce the emotionality and irrationality of human beings into a predictable and rational matrix (Ruch, 2012). It does so by emphasising the development of new policies (based on serious case reviews) which aim to remove risk from the world. These policies ignore the individual and contextual idiosyncrasies of social care work, and instead "create false illusions that the eradication of risk is possible" (Ruch, 2012, p. 1317). NPM driven target-setting and outcome-focused strategies can also lead to organisations failing to support individuals with particularly complex needs (Egdell, Dutton and McQuaid, 2016). Tiffany (2011) calls this the 'pistachio effect', whereby the toughest 'nuts' to open are 'discarded'. As she recounts, public sector organisations who need to meet targets (such as engaging X number of young people in an activity) are likelier to meet their goals if they recruit youths who are likelier to engage *in the first place*.

The influence of NPM extends beyond target setting and fosters (forces?) voluntary organisations, like NGOs, to develop intimate ties with for-profit organisations as a means of economic survival. This process entails NGOs re-shaping themselves to align with neoliberal tenets, like individual responsibility

(Thorpe and Rinehart, 2013). In the case of higher education, NPM practices result in increasing teaching loads due to a growing disparity of student-to-teacher ratios; more part-time instead of fixed-post staff, and higher tuition fees (Lorenz, 2012). Furthermore, NPM in school settings is manifested by the development of school league tables which report “to what extent schools meet, do not meet, or indeed exceed, the targets” (Torrance, 2017, p. 88). Similarly, the schooling watchdog, OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education), no longer prioritises helping teachers in their work. Instead, it aims to enforce accountability by “engaging private contractors to undertake school inspections on behalf of the state” (Carr, 2016A, p. 24).

Therefore, the power of NPM as a technology of neoliberal governmentality is that it diverts the public sectors’ gaze from the quality of their policies to preoccupations about meeting NPM tenets of measurement and accountability. By governing ‘at a distance’, NPM re-configures the public sector’s notions of what it means to be a ‘good’ public sector service. A ‘good’ organisation adheres to NPM, thus enabling them to present their credentials to the free market, in turn maximising their chances of competing for funds. Thus, the practices of NPM re-sculpt the conduct of the public sector and transform it into ‘quasi-markets’ which, in theory, slot into the previously mentioned free market equation Lorenz (2012, p. 601) describes:

“free market = competition = best value for money = optimum efficiency for individuals as both consumers and owners of private property.”

Responsibilisation

The second technology of neoliberal governmentality I want to unpack is responsibilisation. Responsibilisation refers to the practices whereby “we, as individuals, are responsible for the always in-process, always provisional, always precarious state of the Do It Yourself (DIY) project of the self” (Kelly,

2017, pp. 57-58). Though NPM and responsabilisation are two distinct technologies, they share many similarities and overlap in the goal of re-shaping people and institutions into 'quasi-markets'. NPM focuses on turning health care, education, and the voluntary sector into enterprises, whilst responsabilisation re-configures human beings into enterprises of the self:

"Neoliberal strategies of rule, found in diverse realms including workplaces, educational institutions and health and welfare agencies, encourage people to see themselves as individualised and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own wellbeing. This conception of the "active society" can also be linked to a particular politics of self in which we are all encouraged to "work on ourselves" in a range of domains." (Larner, 2000A, p. 13).

Akin to how NPM constitutes government 'at a distance', so does responsabilisation: as Larner indicated at the end of the above quote, "we are all encouraged to 'work on ourselves'". Foucault (2008) calls this *homo oeconomicus*: a technology of neoliberal governmentality which re-sculpts what it means to be a human being by emphasising a) people should be responsible for their own choices, and b) they should compete for their own resources. *Homo oeconomicus* is "the man of enterprise and production" instead of "the man of exchange or the man consumer"¹² (Foucault, 2008, p. 147). The neoliberal subject – *homo oeconomicus* – is an

"Entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings" (Foucault, 2008, p. 226).

The emphasis on individual responsibility is paramount. Responsibilisation invites everyone to maximise their freedom by transforming themselves into the best 'quasi-market' possible; it encourages human beings to become entrepreneurs of themselves. According to Rose (1996, p. 150):

¹² The latter being associated to 'classical liberalism' and the former to neoliberalism.

“The self is to be a subjective being, it is to aspire to autonomy, it is to strive for personal fulfilment in it earthly life, it is to interpret its reality and destiny as a matter of individual responsibility, it is to find meaning in existence by shaping its life through acts of choice. These ways of thinking about humans as selves, and these ways of judging them, are linked to certain ways of acting upon such selves” (Italics in original).

Thus, a ‘good’ person is someone who demonstrates individual responsibility by ‘improving themselves’ and, by extension, bolstering their credentials to compete in the free market. This conceptualisation of human beings also situates them as “competitive creatures” (Read, 2009, p. 28) whose natural instinct is to compete for survival in the neoliberal ‘jungle law’. The technology of responsibilisation removes a person’s context from the equation (Kelly, 2011) and assumes everyone – regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status – can ‘work on themselves’ and succeed in a market society. The logical extension of this assumption is that “human misery is largely defined as a function of personal choices” (Giroux, 2005, p. 8); the poor are unable to produce riches, and the unhappy are unable to produce happiness. Consequently, by ignoring social structures and barriers, the technology of responsibilisation ‘individualises the social’ (Jamrozik, 2009): people come to understand that their ‘human misery’ (to use Giroux’s earlier words) is *their* fault and the *natural* outcome of having failed *as an enterprise*.

The technology of responsibilisation, by individualising the social, has a profound effect on what it *means* to be a human being. As Sugarman (2014) indicates, neoliberal governmentality encourages an understanding of personhood as “fully autonomous entities who exist prior to and separate from the linguistic, social, and cultural practices in which they choose to participate” (p. 66). This notion of personhood – whereby historical and sociocultural factors are largely overlooked – is neither absolute nor neutral; it is the product of neoliberal technologies of governmentality (Larner and Butler, 2005). Martin et al. (2003) identify an alternative conceptualisation of personhood, one that deviates from

responsibilisation. For them, a human being is someone who is critical and reflective, capable of understanding that their personhood is the product of historical and sociocultural traditions. By implication, if one's personhood is shaped by one's unique context, then somebody else's personhood is shaped by their unique context. Whilst responsibilisation constructs a form of personhood whereby misfortune is blamed on the individual (Giroux, 2005, Torrance, 2017); Martin et al.'s (2003) alternative type of personhood treats misfortune differently, by promoting an

“ongoing dialogical exchange in the shared effort to expand the horizon of intelligibility within which to understand and respond to individual and collective concerns” (Sugarman, 2014, p. 67).

Considering responsibilisation re-shapes people's notions of personhood, how does it do this in practice? In education settings, the promotion of assessments and examinations (high stakes testing) determines individual success or failure (for both students and teachers!) (Torrance, 2017). In youth detention centres, self-assessment has been used as a technology of responsibilisation whereby 'good' behaviours (as determined by a manual) are rewarded. This practice focused on “the ethical reconstruction of residents as prudent and self-regulating subjects” (Franzen, 2015, p. 259). Elsewhere, youth sport programmes designed for 'at risk' youths have aimed to equip them with tools for self-improvement and self-management (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011) such as 'life skills'¹³ (Danish et al., 2002).

In sum, the neoliberal technology of responsibilisation re-shapes personhood to align with the free market paradigm. A 'good' person is someone who is an entrepreneur of themselves and who aims to improve themselves. This process resonates with 'individualising the social' by disregarding historical and sociocultural contexts, and instead attributing human misfortune to poor decisions. Underpinning responsibilisation is the assumption that human beings, like markets and enterprises, are 'calculable':

¹³ For instance, leadership, communication or determination.

“We have entered, it appears, the age of the calculable person, the person whose individuality is no longer ineffable, unique, and beyond knowledge, but can be known, mapped, calibrated, evaluated, quantified, predicted, and managed” (Rose, 1996, p. 88).

Neoliberal governmentality as the context for my research

The purpose of my research is to explore how the neoliberal project – particularly in terms of governance – operates in the context of a ‘real world’ public sector organisation: a UK youth sports charity. The nature of my question renders the framework of neoliberal governmentality suitable, especially given an in-depth examination of how the neoliberal project shapes a youth sport charity has not been previously carried out. The inherent malleability of neoliberal governmentality, what Wacquant (2012, p. 70) calls the “small-n neoliberalisms born of the ongoing hybridisation of neoliberal practices and idea with local conditions and forms” reflects the goal of my research: to understand the ‘hybridisation’ of neoliberal practices with the local condition of a youth sports charity. Thus, the governmentality framework helps me study neoliberalism ‘in practice’ rather than ‘in theory’. There is a stark contrast between these two approaches (Hilgers, 2011); the former is often presented in a ‘clear cut’ manner whilst the latter is fraught with messiness and resistance (Larner, 2000A).

Though the plasticity of the governmentality framework enables me to address the ‘real world’ complexities of studying neoliberalism ‘on the ground’, this malleability is also a weakness. As Hilgers (2011) points out, looking at a youth charity through the lens of governmentality risks over interpreting the propagation of the ‘market rationality’ in the same way that “it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail” (Maslow, 1966, pp. 15-16). Wacquant (2012) echoes Hilger’s (2011) criticism by suggesting that neoliberalism as governmentality is a conceptualisation which is “overly broad and promiscuous, overpopulated with proliferating institutions all seemingly infected by

the neoliberal virus” (p. 68). Despite these criticisms, examining my youth sport charity of choice – SportHelp – through the lens of neoliberal governmentality still offered the most complete framework to answer my research questions. As Larner (2000A, p. 14) indicates, “the governmentality literature has not paid a great deal of attention to the politics surrounding specific programmes and policies”. Though the governmentality literature has progressed since the year 2000¹⁴, there is still a substantial amount of ground to cover in terms of studying neoliberal governmentality ‘in practice’.

Having examined what neoliberalism is, how it governs our lives through technologies like New Public Management and responsabilisation, and having outlined neoliberal governmentality as the context for my research, I will now proceed to look at the second major area of the chapter: charities and how they are governed by neoliberalism.

Charities and neoliberal governmentality

In the previous neoliberalism section, I described how the technology of New Public Management re-configures the public sector – the domain charities operate in – into ‘quasi-markets’. I now expand on this analysis in relation to UK charities by examining three areas. I first look at what constitutes a charity by offering a brief history of charities and the role they play in UK society. Then, I address how neoliberal governmentality, through the technologies of NPM and responsabilisation, govern charities ‘at a distance’.

¹⁴ Authors like Larner and Butler (2005) or Buckingham (2009) have paid attention to the politics surround specific programmes and policies. Similarly, others more recently have looked at the technology of responsabilisation in practice (see Phoenix & Kelly, 2013; Gradin Franzen, 2015).

What is a charity?

Though the UK voluntary sector is prone to use a plethora of definitions for similar services, such as charitable, voluntary, community, or not-for-profit (Kelly, 2007), the focus of my research is on charities. Considering the concepts of charity and charities in England and Wales¹⁵ can be traced back to the fourteenth century (Alvey, 1995), what a charity is ‘for’ has changed over centuries. In the 14th and 15th centuries, charity was conceived as a form of personal salvation. Good deeds – such as giving money to the poor, or praying for the souls of the dead – enhanced people’s chances of entering heaven and thus avoiding purgatory or hell (Alvey, 1995). Over the span of the next three centuries (16th-18th), charity came to be understood as a social responsibility given its use to support people’s education, healthcare, or apprenticeships. In 1601, the ‘Statute of Charitable Uses’ was established to regulate how land could be used for ‘charity purposes’. Though now repealed, the statute laid the groundwork of current charity law (Alvey, 1995).

The 19th century is considered the UK’s ‘golden age’ of philanthropy (Hilton et al., 2012). It is during this period that the foundations of modern day charities were set. In addition to the surge in charitable activity to support those in need and the development of new forms of associational life, the Charity Commission was established in 1835¹⁶. This regulatory body emerged as a watchdog for the voluntary sector, a role it continues to play today. However, it was not until 1891, 56 years after the emergence of the Charity Commission, that the parameters of what a charity is ‘for’, and what legally constitutes a charity, were cemented:

¹⁵ There are different bodies which govern charities in England and Wales; Scotland; and Ireland.

¹⁶ Though the Charity Commission was established in 1835, until 1960 it regulated trusts. It was after 1960 that it began supervising charities too (Barman, 2007)

“Trusts for the relief of poverty; trusts for the advancement of education; trusts for the advancement of religion; and trusts for other purposes beneficial to the community, not falling under any of the preceding heads” (House of Lords, 1891, p. 28).

These four ‘charitable purposes’ grew through successive rounds of legislation (like the Charities Act 2006) into the current total of thirteen, as outlined by the Charities Act 2011. Alongside this development came a change in what charity is for in the 20th century:

“For if, in the period prior to 1945, NGOs, civil society and charities grew alongside political parties and trade unions, in the period since, the analysis has tended to focus on them as alternative forms of political action” (Hilton et al., 2012, p. 20).

Therefore, charities are independent organisations from the state whose mission is to improve people’s lives. To operate as a charity, organisations in England and Wales must register with the Charity Commission by complying with two requirements (Charity Commission, 2013): a) they align with at least one of the thirteen ‘charitable purposes’¹⁷, and b) what the organisation offers is for the ‘public benefit’. In turn, the Charity Commission’s role is to register and regulate charities “to ensure that the public can support charities with confidence” (GOV.UK, 2017).

Charities are a well-established component of the fabric of English and Welsh society (Hilton et al., 2012). The most recent Charity Commission figures (Charity Commission, 2017) indicate there are 183,168 charities who accrued a combined £74 billion worth of income 2017. These charities are overseen by 950.000 trustees, they employ over 1.5 million staff, and are supported by 3.5 million volunteers. Beyond these numbers, a cursory look at English and Welsh society is enough to appreciate the role of

¹⁷ These include ‘the advancement of education’, ‘the prevention or relief of poverty’, or ‘the advancement of health or the saving of lives’, amongst others.

charity in people's lives. Cities and towns boast multiple charity shops¹⁸, whilst it is frequent to come across individuals engaging in a range of activities (such as running marathons) to raise funds for a charity.

Despite the positive role charity plays in English and Welsh society, the charity sector has been on a proverbial roller-coast ride the past few years (2014-2017) with regards to public perception. In 2014, the UK research company Ipsos MORI (2014) reported that the English and Welsh public trusted charities as much as they had done in 2012 and 2010. Despite this satisfaction, the public raised concerns about the use of aggressive fundraising techniques and excessive spending on administration costs instead of on frontline services¹⁹. A year later, npfSynergy (2015) indicated trust in charities had decreased by 3% relative to 2014, and by 13% in comparison to 2013²⁰. Though these reports do not paint an in-depth account of people's responses, they offer a benchmark of the public's perception towards charities before the raft of unsavoury charity-related events which took place during the summer of 2015.

During the summer of 2015, a series of charity 'scandals' were widely scrutinised by the UK press. The two most notable events (which also aligned with the two central concerns expressed in the 2014 Ipsos MORI report) were the demise of the charity Kids Company and the suicide of 92-year old Olive Cooke. Kids Company's remit was to support vulnerable young people, but the charity was forced to close amidst allegations of financial mismanagement despite receiving millions of pounds from the government (Grierson, 2015; Butler, 2015). Unrelatedly, Olive Cooke was driven to commit suicide when she felt hounded by charity fundraisers (Morris, 2015). Because of these events, from the summer of 2015 into 2016, charities took a bruising. However, the charity sector reacted quickly and has sought ways to regain public trust (NPC, 2016; Slawson, 2015). To do so, there have been proposals around curtailing predatory

¹⁸ They sell a colorful collection of donated items (from books and DVDs to furniture and crockery) and use the proceeds to fund the charity that opened the shop, like Oxfam or the British Heart Foundation.

¹⁹ Here we begin to see how people's concerns with charities were rooted in *cost-efficiency* and charity's aggressive approaches to compete and survive within the neoliberal 'jungle law'.

²⁰ The npfSynergy results cannot be directly compared to the Ipsos MORI report. Whilst Ipsos Mori produced a dedicated report about charities, npfSynergy surveyed people's trust for a range of institutions, like schools or the armed forces.

fundraising techniques, calls for greater transparency and audit, and the realisation the charities may have to educate the public about why funding administration costs is important.

Charities' reactions, for the time being, seemed to have worked in so far as gradually regaining the public's trust. A YouGov report (Rowe, 2016) published in February 2016 suggested charities are still well regarded for the work they do, however, the report underlines the need to improve since "the root causes of the problems lie in transparency and governance" (p. 17). Months later, npfSynergy's (2016) Autumn report suggested trust in charities was at its highest since 2013. Again, though some of the results in these reports should be interpreted with caution, they give us an indication of two things. Firstly, they depict the murky waters charities need to constantly navigate to remain afloat, and secondly, they highlight how charities are influenced by neoliberal technologies of governmentality.

Charities and neoliberal governmentality

Since the 1980s, UK charities have increasingly been reformed according to the free market paradigm (Bruce and Chew, 2011) and neoliberal governmentality. This reflects how neoliberal ideology has been 'bleeding' into increasing parts of the public sector. Through technologies like New Public Management and responsibilisation, charities have felt growing pressures to monitor and report their outputs through calculation and measurement (Larner and Butler, 2005). Considering competition for funds and contracts has ballooned in the neoliberal, hyper-competitive landscape (Davies, 2011), charities who become better 'quasi-markets' through proficient calculation and measurement are likelier to secure funds. Taking into account that the amount of registered charities appears to be growing by about 1,000 a year since 2009 (GOV.UK, 2014), and that there are too many charities doing the same work (Green, 2014), competition is fierce. Failing to internalise NPM processes, therefore, is like a self-serving death sentence.

I say 'self-serving' because the technology of responsabilisation encourages charities to see themselves as agents of their own destiny. It is up to them to make the 'right' choices to thrive in the neoliberal market, whereby 'right' is characterised by embracing NPM practices. This is what Morison (2000, p. 119) calls exercising 'responsibilised autonomy':

"The sector is being encouraged to exercise a 'responsibilised autonomy' and pursue its interests through a framework where the 'systems of thought' and 'systems of action' emphasise and reinforce an economic rationality alongside the more traditional welfare ethos."

To further appreciate the extent to which technologies of neoliberal governmentality shape and influence charities, I will now illustrate how the rhetoric in the previous section of this chapter ('what is a charity?') is imbued by neoliberal governmentality. Firstly, the NPM process of cost-effectiveness, or value-for-money, is apparent in the public's perception that charities are spending too much money on administration costs. The implication here is a lack of spending on front-line services. This perception creates a problem for charities: the target-setting practices imbued by NPM are almost exclusively based on meeting front-line service goals, not administration goals²¹. However, administration costs are *necessary* to develop a strong infrastructure upon which front-line services can flourish. Consequently, the public's value-for-money critique is rooted in the assumption that charities are 'quasi-markets', and that some of them are not using their resources effectively.

The 'quasi-market' conceptualisation of charities was also used as the rationale to explain the demise of KidsCo. As an 'enterprise', the charity 'should have done better' with the money they received from the government. What is particularly noteworthy of this process is that, after the collapse of KidsCo, there were calls for greater transparency, audit, and accountability: hallmarks of the technology of NPM (Bevir et al., 2003; Bovaird & Löffler, 2009). As Power (1994) has illustrated, practices such as audit are

²¹ Charity goals are in line with 'engage 20% more teenagers in sport', not 'spend 12% less on printing'.

particularly resilient because, when they fail, people demand *more* of it (instead of questioning the practices itself).

Jamrozik's (2009) 'individualisation of the social' is also apparent. The response to Olive Cooke's suicide (triggered by aggressive fundraising techniques), as well as KidsCo's collapse, was to blame the charity sector and expect the sector to rectify the situation. There was no interrogation as to *why* charities were using aggressive fundraising techniques in the first place, or whether there were other socio-cultural factors at play which explained KidsCo's demise. Thus, in line with how the technology of responsibilisation operates, there was no room for contextual factors (Kelly, 2011); the problems were reduced to individual responsibility.

Particularly enlightening is the YouGov (Rowe, 2016) report which indicated "the root causes of the problems lie in transparency and governance" (p. 17). This suggests that 'bad' governance – failure to embrace the technologies of NPM and responsibilisation – resulted in overly aggressive fundraising and the collapse of a large charity. *If* the charities had, instead, demonstrated 'good' governance, and had 'managed' their 'enterprises' in accordance with the technologies of neoliberal governmentality, these problems would not have occurred (or, at least, they would have been less likely to occur). This, yet again, shows how charities have been re-shaped by neoliberal governmentality (Buckingham, 2009; Davies, 2011; Fyfe, 2005).

The influence of NPM and responsibilisation does not solely affect how charities are perceived or run, they also influence the types of programmes charities develop. For instance, charities which become more 'professionalised' – an aspect of New Public Management (Laurie and Bondi, 2005) – are prone to

"... hierarchical, bureaucratic structures with internal divisions of labour between managers, welfare professionals and volunteers. They [professionalised charities] tend to develop more passive forms of citizenship, where service users are consumers of welfare delivered by a professionalised workforce of paid staff and highly trained volunteers" (Fyfe et al., 2006, p. 637).

The kinds of citizenship charities foster speaks to one of the core debates of non-formal education I advanced in the introduction. Considering charities are providers of non-formal education, what is the role of non-formal education? Is its purpose to instil passive forms of citizenship, and notions of personhood which align with an ethic of 'individualising the social'? Or should charities be vehicles for a 'type' of non-formal education which encourages a critical and reflective personhood; one that acknowledges one's and others' unique historical and socio-cultural contexts (Martin, Sugarman and Hickinbottom, 2003)? This is a debate I will continually revisit throughout my thesis.

The influence of neoliberal governmentality on how charities 'see' and govern themselves is substantial. However, as I previously advanced, it is important to remember that governmentality differs from hegemony (Bates, 1975) in that governmentality is not a monolithic, top down force. Neoliberal governmentality is shaped by the "ongoing hybridisation of neoliberal practices and ideas with local conditions and forms" (Wacquant, 2012, p. 70). One of these 'local conditions' is that charities are not passive organisations in the same way that charity staff are not 'cultural dopes'. Though the millions of charity trustees, managers, employees, and volunteers may not be familiar with the term 'neoliberalism' does not mean they are unaware of the *effects* of New Public Management and responsibilisation. The works of Buckingham (2009) and Fyfe et al. (2006) illustrate that charity staff were acutely aware of these processes, and described feeling hamstrung by them. But this was not always the case. Buckingham (2009) suggested that some aspects of NPM, like setting targets and monitoring programmes, were embraced by the charity she studied because they were seen to enhance the quality of an organisation's services. This shows how:

"What actually happens on the ground is contingent on the interaction of rationalities and technologies on the one hand, and the agency of both practitioners and clients on the other"
(Williams et al., 2012, p. 1487).

Not *all* aspects of neoliberalism are resisted in the same way not *all* of them are embraced. What is resisted or embraced is not universal; it depends on the *context* of particular ‘local forms’. This is why neoliberal governmentality is a suitable framework for my research. It allows me to develop an understanding of how the neoliberal landscape shapes a *particular* charity (SportHelp) whilst acknowledging that neoliberal governmentality – unlike hegemony – is not a one-way street²² (Morison, 2000). An example of the relationship between neoliberalism and ‘local forms’ is that, despite the neoliberal and NPM thrust for measurement, quantification has been part of the fabric of charities since the 1900s:

“What activities or processes have been measured by charities has altered over time: while social service professionals in the early twentieth century measured community need to justify their new methods of intervention, charities in the 1960s and 1970s reported their financial efficiency to assert their legitimacy” (Barman, 2007, p. 112).

The point here is that quantification *itself* does not constitute neoliberal governmentality. What does is quantification *tied* to an understanding of charities as ‘quasi-markets’. Barman’s (2007) thesis – that quantification is not a neoliberal ‘evil’, but part of the history of charities – is further supported if we look at literature that pre-dates the neoliberal epoch:

“Sponsors are key figures in the character-training industry for ultimately it is their backing and money that keep the movement in business. Examining sponsors’ motives is therefore just as relevant to explaining the industry’s development as the objectives of course organisers” (Roberts et al., 1974, p. 84).

²² As I previously advanced, this is why studying neoliberalism in practice is messy and complex (Hilgers, 2011).

Before the rise of neoliberalism, charities engaged in measurement-reporting practices as they needed to attract funders. However, neoliberal governmentality has ‘hijacked’ or ‘corroded’ a local context – the meaning of ‘measurement’ for charities – for its own benefit. ‘Measurement’ is now an indicator of a charity’s *worth* as a ‘quasi-market’; as an enterprise. ‘Good’ charities provide forms of measurement tied to NPM (like target-setting), whilst ‘bad’ charities fail to do so. This example illustrates how neoliberal governmentality constitutes the “ongoing hybridisation of neoliberal practices and ideas with local conditions and forms” (Wacquant, 2012, p. 70).

Thus, neoliberal governmentality influences how charities govern themselves by re-sculpting them into ‘quasi-markets’. Through the technologies of NPM and responsabilisation, more ‘professionalised’ charities are likelier to promote passive forms of citizenship which align with neoliberal tenets. However, neoliberal governmentality is not monolithic, and needs to be understood as part of a local context. This is why my research focuses on a single charity; it enables me to explore how the neoliberal landscape shaped a specific organisation, and what that shaping process *looks like*.

Socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents, neoliberal governmentality, and human needs

Having mapped out how charities in England and Wales are shaped by technologies of neoliberal governmentality, the next port of call is to examine how these technologies influence the recipients of charity work. Given my thesis is concerned with a youth charity’s provision of non-formal education for socio-economically disadvantaged young people, this section will focus on socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents. I first outline socio-economic disadvantage with the aim of highlighting how it is a complex social and structural problem. Then, I address the UK’s policy context around poverty and disadvantage, illustrating how it treats disadvantage as an *individual* rather than *social* problem. Thirdly,

I outline what constitutes ‘adolescence’ and ‘youth’ whilst demonstrating how, in line with the UK policy context, the rhetoric around socio-economically disadvantaged young people is shaped by the neoliberal technology of responsibilisation. From here I move on to conceptualise a means of exploring how non-formal education can support disadvantaged youths: by meeting their needs. After I outline thirteen prominent human needs, I address the final part of the section on disadvantaged young people: how and why does non-formal education seem capable of addressing the needs of young people in a manner which formal education cannot?

What is socio-economic disadvantage?

Individuals who are perceived to have a lack of resources are generally described as being in ‘poverty’, being ‘disadvantaged’, or ‘vulnerable’. This list, according to Cox (2000), also frequently includes ‘deprivation’, ‘at risk’ and ‘social exclusion’. The delineation between labels is murky, which is why Kellaghan et al. (1995) suggest that the interchangeable nature of such terms exemplifies the complex economic and social forces at play. Despite the range of terms, my thesis is primarily concerned with socio-economic disadvantage (given that was how SportHelp predominantly described the young people on their programmes). However, making sense of socio-economic disadvantage through an in-depth examination of ‘poverty’ simplifies the process, particularly because UK government policies have shifted from an emphasis on ‘poverty’ to ‘disadvantage’²³. My aim in this section is to illustrate how ‘poverty’ and ‘disadvantage’ are contested *structural* problems, not *individual* problems.

Poverty, or as some conservative thinkers with neoliberal inclinations would say, the ‘underclass’ (Murray, 1990; Murray, 1994), has traditionally been understood as a static phenomenon. As such, it has been conceptualised one-dimensionally through quantitative measures like income levels or occupational

²³ As I will discuss later in the chapter.

status (Wager et al., 2009; Bradley and Corwyn, 2002; Attree, 2006). However, since the 1980s, and particularly throughout the 1990s, academic literature has largely ceased to treat 'poverty' or 'disadvantage' as immutable states (McLoyd et al., 2009). Akin to social exclusion, 'poverty' and 'disadvantage' were conceptualised as a dynamic process (Hills, 2002) concerned with a range of factors which shape the extent to which individuals can participate in society. These factors include income levels, but also extend beyond them to consider 'resources':

"People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live" (Council of the European Union, 2004, p. 8).

It was through a particular emphasis on resources that Townsend's (1979) influential work began to cement poverty as a process rather than a static condition:

"Individuals, families, and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and the amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary patterns, customs and activities" (p. 31).

The 'resources' mentioned in these definitions of poverty encompass a wide range of aspects. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development helps to illustrate what form these 'resources' can take by stressing the significance of aspects like housing quality, community infrastructure or access to support networks. Current definitions build on Townsend's and Bronfenbrenner's work and provide definitions of poverty that, instead of relying on income-related measures, depict a multi-layered process:

“Suffice it to say that poverty is not a unitary variable or distinct event. Rather, it is a conglomerate of stressful conditions and events, many of which are outside personal control, especially if the poverty is chronic. Individuals who are poor are confronted with an unremitting succession of negative life events (e.g., eviction, physical illness, criminal assault) in the context of adverse life conditions such as inadequate housing and dangerous neighbourhoods that together increase the exigencies of day-to-day existence. In addition, they are exposed to a daunting array of aversive physical conditions [...] Because of limited financial resources, negative life events often precipitate additional crises. Problems in one domain can exacerbate or create problems in another domain. Because of this high contagion of stressors, chronic poverty is a pervasive, rather than bounded, crisis. It restricts choices in virtually all domains of life (e.g., choice of neighbourhood, school, educational and recreational activities) and renders the person more subject to control by others” (McLoyd et al., 2009, p. 445).

In short, poverty is a complex process. It extends beyond the simple metric of income levels and encompasses a range of stressors; however, my thesis is not concerned with poverty *per se*. As I indicated previously, my focus lies with socio-economic disadvantage (SED). Given the broad overlaps between poverty and SED, my discussion about poverty was necessary to illustrate that SED is not an easily reducible concept. Socio-economic disadvantage is also referred to as low socio-economic status (SES), which, according to Mueller and Parcel (1981, p. 14):

“The term “social stratification”, for example, is used to describe a social system (usually a society or community) in which individuals, families, or groups are ranked on certain hierarchies or dimensions according to their access to or control over valued commodities such as wealth, power, and status.”

Those with a lower socio-economic status struggle to access resources like wealth, power, and status that could 'move them up the ladder'. Though socio-economic disadvantage is linked to economic deprivation (like poverty), there is often an emphasis on membership to a lower 'social status'. What constitutes this 'status' is both contested (Bradley and Corwyn, 2002) and, like poverty, multifaceted. As Bradley and Corwyn (2002) summarise, lower 'status' and a lack of resources can be characterised via limited access to various forms of capital (Coleman, 1988): financial (material resources), human (immaterial resources, like education), and social (resources gained through social connections). Lower socio-economic status can also be characterised by race (Williams et al., 1997), particularly where ethnic minorities are concerned. Additionally, SES has also been categorised in relation to how groups of individuals participate in social, cultural, or political life (Miech and Hauser, 2001).

In sum, socio-economic disadvantage – like poverty – is characterised by a matrix of issues which are *structural* or *social* in nature. Furthermore, what constitutes 'poverty' or 'socio-economic disadvantage' is highly contested and not easily reducible to a single factor. Structural barriers prevent those from lower socio-economic status access to resources, participation in society, or leveraging different forms of capital. Unfortunately, these *social* problems in a neoliberal society are reduced to *individual* problems (Harkness, Gregg and Macmillan, 2012). In the next section I describe how, through the technology of responsibilisation, the UK neoliberal policy landscape has re-configured how poverty and socio-economic disadvantage is defined, understood, and addressed.

Socio-economic disadvantage in the UK: A policy context

Though my thesis is concerned with socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents and young people, any discussion about the UK's policy context should probably begin with Tony Blair's 1999 pledge to eradicate child poverty by 2020. Achieving cross-party support, this pledge was upheld by the subsequent Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition (2010-2015) and the current Conservative

government (2015 – onwards). Before looking at the current policy context in the UK in more detail, it is worth remembering that the rhetoric around poverty and disadvantage since Margaret Thatcher's first ministry in 1979 has been imbued with an ethos of neoliberal governmentality in terms of responsabilisation and 'individualising the social'.

After 18 years of Conservative governments (1979-1997), Tony Blair and New Labour (1997-2007) attempted to lessen the dominance of neoliberal rhetoric by adopting a communitarian approach. As Brown (2015) outlines, the basis of this communitarian approach entailed an understanding that the problems of poverty and social exclusion could be addressed by facilitating entry *into* the community. However, almost two decades of neoliberal policies had left their mark on the UK and New Labour. Margaret Thatcher reportedly intimated as much when, speaking at an event in Hampshire in 2002, she was asked what her greatest achievement was: "Tony Blair and New Labour. We forced our opponents to change their minds" (Burns, 2008, p. 1). The neoliberal floodgates were open, and Blair's communitarian approach – enabling entry into the community – was tinted with neoliberal values: "entry to the community here is almost synonymous with entry into the paid labour market" (Brown, 2015, p. 6). Following Blair's exit, Gordon Brown's Labour administration endured 3 more years, until 2010. Since then, under a Conservative-led government, there has been a revival of neoliberal policies which treat disadvantage and poverty as *individual* rather than *social* problems (Brown, 2015; Main and Bradshaw, 2016).

Blair's 1999 pledge to eradicate child poverty by 2020 was enshrined by the Child Poverty Act 2010. Given poverty was defined solely in terms of income, the Act ignored the multi-layered aspects of the process. As I discussed in the previous section, 'poverty' is not just about how much income one generates; it entails living in dangerous neighbourhoods, exposure to averse physical conditions, or the restriction of choices in terms of education or work (McLoyd et al., 2009). The right-wing think-tank Centre

for Social Justice (2012, p. 4) also critiqued the Act's narrow definition of poverty, but for different reasons:

"Our own research has shown that poverty is caused by complex, interlocking factors such as worklessness, family breakdown, educational failure, addiction and serious personal debt".

Whereas the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) points to *individual* factors as the cause of poverty, McLoyd et al. (2009) identified *structural* problems as the cause. Nevertheless, in the same year as the CSJ report was published (2012), the Secretary of State and Pensions Iain Duncan Smith presented the white paper 'Social justice: Transforming lives'. It constituted a government shift from focusing on 'poverty' to addressing 'disadvantage'. The rationale for this change echoes the individual blame rhetoric advanced in the CSJ's report:

"We recognise that disadvantage is far wider than income poverty alone²⁴. Though low income is a useful proxy measure, it does not tell the full story of an individual's well-being. Frequently, very low income is a symptom of deeper problems, whether that is family breakdown, educational failure, welfare dependency, debt, drug dependency, or some other relevant factor. [...] We need a new approach to multiple disadvantages which is based on tackling the root causes of these social issues, and not just dealing with the symptoms" (Department of Work and Pensions, 2012, p. 10, footnote added to original).

In turn, the Coalition utilised the concept of 'disadvantage' (as defined above) as the basis of their 'Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017' (Department of Work and Pensions, 2014), the latest strategy designed to meet Blair's pledge of eradicating child poverty by 2020. Emphasising the goal of "breaking the cycle of disadvantage – where you start in life should not determine where you end up" (p. 11), the Coalition

²⁴ Defined as 60 per cent of the median national income (State of Work and Pensions, 2012, p. 9)

outlined three actions to tackle child poverty: support families into work and increase their earnings, enhance living standards, and raise poor children's educational attainment. This is a familiar neoliberal narrative, and an example of how such governmental strategies constitutes governing 'at a distance'. Through the technology of responsibilisation, young people are expected to take responsibility and 'raise' their educational aspirations (Pimlott-Wilson, 2015). Similarly, 'disadvantaged' parents (using the individual responsibility definition advocated by the Coalition government) are expected to make more money and bolster *their* living standards, thus becoming 'good' parents by creating a 'better' environment for their children (Hartas, 2015; Vincent, 2017).

The latest update on the Child Poverty Act 2010 is the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. In addition to repealing a range of items in the Child Poverty Act, the Welfare Reform and Work Act replaces the previously used definition of poverty (in terms of income) with a focus on 'life chances'. Building on the 'Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017' and its responsibilisation ethos, these 'life chances' are conceived in terms of worklessness, educational attainment, and disadvantage. Thus, the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 compounds the extent to which poverty and disadvantage are rationalised as individual problems. This spirit is powerfully captured by Main and Bradshaw (2016, p. 40), even though they are not speaking about the Welfare Reform Act itself:

"Policy changes [...] have been matched with rhetoric that positions poor people as 'troubled' (Casey, 2012) 'skivers' (Osborne, 2012) who need motivating to 'take responsibility' (Duncan Smith, 2012). Whilst individual explanations of poverty are more easily (though no more accurately – see Harkness et al., 2012) applied to adults than to children, the positioning of child poverty as a result of the 'feckless' (Duncan Smith, 2011) behaviours of parents who then 'transmit' (Clegg, 2011) poverty to children transforms child poverty from a problem best addressed through providing additional resources to poor families, to one best addressed by helping poor parents to overcome personal shortcomings."

Consequently, the UK policy landscape with regards to poverty and disadvantage is tinted with a neoliberal hue that individualises the social. This is in stark contrast to the understandings of poverty and disadvantage I outlined in the previous section – ‘what is socio-economic disadvantage’ – where they are acknowledged as a combination of complex *social* and *structural* factors. Having addressed what socio-economic disadvantage is, and charted out the UK policy context, I now look at the population charities aim to support: socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents.

Socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents

Adolescence is usually conceived in the Western world as the phase that extends from puberty to adulthood (Williams and Butcher, 2011). The process of adolescence entails gradually reducing dependence on primary caregivers whilst embarking on a journey of behavioural, emotional and cognitive transformations (Allen and Land, 1999; Ridge, 2002). Adolescence is often categorised under the broader umbrella term of ‘youth’, which according to Furlong and Cartmel (1997, cited in Billett, 2011) runs from the mid-teen years until the mid-twenties. However, ‘youth’ “is not a standalone concept, but a complex system of meanings and inferences about young people and their place in society” (Billett, 2011, p. 30). The concept has morphed historically and across cultures (see Feixa, 2011 for a review), which is why it is preferable to view youth as a “relational concept defined by lack of independence” (Billett, 2011, p. 30). Therefore, for the purposes of my thesis I will use the terms ‘adolescence’ and ‘youth’ interchangeably.

Adolescence is a notoriously troubling developmental phase. Unfortunately, the literature suggests socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents are likelier to suffer through more turbulent times than their equivalents from a higher socio-economic standing (Dubois et al., 1992). This is because low SES adolescents tend to endure greater hardships whilst having fewer resources to call upon.

Understanding the relationship between these hardships (or stressors) and young people's physical, psychological, and social development matters because

"Some outcomes linked to socio-economic disadvantage are arguably of greater consequence during adolescence than earlier developmental periods" (McLoyd et al., 2009, p. 447).

According to McLoyd et al. (2009), adolescence is the first-time young people begin to plan for the future; it is when youths become aware of their socio-economic disadvantage (and the stigma attached to it), and it is also when they commence distancing themselves from the family unit. Therefore, adolescence is a period where one's personhood begins to be shaped. Considering the stressors low SES youth endure – which I will unpack in the following paragraphs – it is imperative to appreciate how non-formal education supports young people's development. Do non-formal education initiatives provided by charities acknowledge youth's lives by encouraging a concept of personhood whereby each person's history and socio-cultural context is unique (Martin, Sugarman and Hickinbottom, 2003)? Or does the neoliberal technology of responsibilisation instigate personhood as a-contextual individual responsibility, whereby stressors are conceived as a 'problem' young people need to solve themselves?

One of the dominant models in the literature that looks at the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and adolescents' development is the Family Stress Model. This model suggests that adolescents' psychosocial development is impaired as a result of the strain economic deprivation places on families (McLoyd et al., 2009). Though all adolescents and families (from all backgrounds) will at some point undergo stressful situations, Santiago et al. (2011) indicate that socio-economically disadvantaged individuals and families have to contend with *more* stressful and unpredictable lives. This constant exposure to a higher number of stressors is theorised to trigger impaired psychosocial development, physical health, and educational attainment (Bradley and Corwyn, 2002).

Stressors come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from more obvious issues like concerns about provision of food and shelter for family members (Dodson and Bravo, 2005) to the gnawing effects of residing in noisy, low quality housing (Evans and English, 2002). These conditions, often precipitated through financial strain and struggling to make ends meet, are prone to challenge family dynamics (Ghate and Hazel, 2002) and thus influence adolescents' development. Further stresses include the pronounced exposure to violence and crime (Evans, 2004), the difficulty of accessing transport (Gill and Jack, 2007), and the complexity of negotiating relationships in communities where it may be unwise (and unsafe) to trust neighbours (Cutrona, Wallace and Wesner, 2006). Micklewright and Stewart (2000) suggest growing up in an environment characterised by a higher degree of 'worklessness' may limit young people's future aspirations²⁵, whereas Ridge (2002, 2011) highlights how the challenge of negotiating poverty in a consumerist UK culture has an impact on youths' social inclusion. Another form of stress emerges from the lack of cinemas or leisure opportunities in deprived areas (Wager et al., 2009). How can parents enrol their children in social and educational activities which fill youths' time in a meaningful manner (Sidebotham, 2001) if there are none in the community and admission and transport costs are prohibitive?

Despite the substantial body of work focusing on the Family Stress Model, this literature can be critiqued in two ways. Firstly, there is a danger of reducing 'socio-economic disadvantage' to 'economic deprivation'. As I discussed earlier, socio-economic disadvantage is broader than having limited financial income; it is important to consider aspects such as social capital or the quality of human relationships a youth has access to. This is a point Ridge (2011) makes (though her paper focuses on poverty and children):

"The social repercussions of poverty are often overlooked and easily disregarded, especially when policy concerns are focused on other perhaps more tangible concerns such as children's economic welfare, their school attendance and performance, and their health and well-being. Yet the social

²⁵ However, as Main and Bradshaw (2016) point out, "child poverty is not merely the consequence of family breakdown or worklessness – most poor children are living with two employed parents" (p. 45).

and relational effects of poverty are clearly fundamental issues for low-income children themselves” (p. 82).

The second critique of the Family Stress Model is that some of its research unwittingly endorses neoliberal values by reducing the *social* problem of stressors to an *individual* problem of personhood. For instance, according to Bradley and Corwyn (2002):

“There is substantial evidence that low-SES children more often manifest symptoms of psychiatric disturbance and maladaptive social functioning than children from more affluent circumstances” (p. 377).

Whilst constantly dealing with hardships is likelier to lead to anxiety or depression, those outcomes are *triggered* by a youth’s context; not by a youth’s *personhood*. Contrarily, Bradley and Corwyn’s analysis suggest it is socio-economically disadvantaged young people’s *personhood* itself which leads to psychiatric disturbance and maladaptive social functioning²⁶. This rhetoric is in line with the UK policy context I outlined, whereby ‘disadvantage’ is an issue young people should solve by raising their own educational attainment and working on improving their entrepreneurial self:

“In a time of consistent cuts to education, are the needs of disadvantaged youth somewhat overlooked and deemed as ‘their problem’ because other youth from similar historical backgrounds are managing to navigate the educational system with limited resources?” (Brann-Barrett, 2011, p. 276).

Understanding the stresses and challenges socio-economically disadvantaged young people face enables a more empathic account of their lives. It also helps us move beyond a deficit-reduction approach

²⁶ Some authors (eg., Carr & Costas Batlle, 2015; Sugarman, 2015) have written about the need for psychology to have a social conscience and consider to what extent psychology is supporting neoliberal rhetoric.

(Coakley, 2002) whereby low SES adolescents are insinuated to have 'deficient' forms of personhood which require 'fixing':

Young people from low SES backgrounds are presumed to lack ambition, drive and energy. Much of the responsibility for school failure, diminished employment prospects and the financial hardship they experience is seen to reside in a combination of cultural, family and individual deficiencies. [...] To a large extent, young people in poor economic circumstances are the victims of a vicious blame game that conveniently ignores the oppressive political and social conditions shaping their lives (McInerney & Smyth, 2015, p. 241).

The 'blame game' McInerney and Smyth (2015) refer to is the re-positioning of young people as being *the* risk instead of being *at* risk (Giroux, 1999). As such, *how* charities within a neoliberal landscape engage with socio-economically disadvantaged young people is a crucial aspect to interrogate. Do they adopt a deficit-reduction approach and promote a concept of personhood rooted in a 'pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps' ethos, or do they acknowledge disadvantaged adolescents' socio-cultural context? Efforts to achieve the former instead of the latter, according to Freire (2003, p. 65), mean that

"Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated."

Having explored what constitutes socio-economic disadvantage, mapped the UK policy context, and examined the stressors affecting adolescents from a lower socio-economic status, I now address a way of conceptualising how non-formal education can support disadvantaged adolescents: human needs.

Socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents' needs

The overarching goal of non-formal education programmes is to improve young people's lives by meeting their needs (Ardizzzone, 2003; Coombs and Ahmed, 1974; Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi, 2015; Romi and Schmida, 2009; Russell, 2001; Souto-Otero, 2016; Weyer, 2009). As such, needs are a useful way of conceptualising how socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents can be supported. However, making sense of adolescents' needs is not straightforward given these needs arise from the interplay of (at least) youths' background, family status, culture, peers, socio-economic status, and gender:

"In theory, needs should provide us with a useful way of talking about the human condition, a way of comparing and explaining our observations and experiences of life. In reality, we often find that needs are messy and a difficult starting place for planning" (Pinnock & Garnett, 2002, p. 76).

Given the exploratory nature of my research and the inherent complexity of studying human needs, I required an approach which was both bounded yet not restrictive. This stance is in line with my position on neoliberalism as governmentality. Just like I accept there are many small-n neoliberalisms which are shaped by local structures (instead of a Big-N monolithic Neoliberalism), I also contend there are many context-specific small-n needs (rather than a catch-all set of big-N Needs). Thus, instead of relying on a particular taxonomy of needs²⁷, I conducted a literature 'meta-analysis' on a range of taxonomies and research to produce a list of thirteen prominent needs. In doing so, I generated a framework which was structurally strong (by outlining thirteen needs) and flexible (instead of trying to 'prove' or 'disprove' my framework, my goal was to see which of the elements in it were relevant to my data, if any).

²⁷ Prominent taxonomies include the works of Doyal and Gough (1991), Maslow (1943), Pringle (1980) or Bradshaw et al. (2013)

I have kept the contents of my thirteen-item ‘framework’ as succinct as possible for two reasons. Firstly, as I have already mentioned, the goal of my ‘framework’ is to provide a flavour of the range of needs which are considered relevant for young people’s development²⁸. The most applicable needs – in relation to my data – have been addressed at length in the discussion chapter. Secondly, since the purpose of my research is not to defend a new taxonomy of needs, I do not think an in-depth examination of each of the thirteen items is necessary; at this stage of my thesis, it is more useful to take a superficial approach. Therefore, this section will have achieved its aim if, by the end, the reader has an appreciation of socio-economically disadvantaged young people’s needs.

Autonomy
Autonomy refers to a youth’s power to determine their own life choices (Fattore, Mason and Watson, 2007). Those with more autonomy have greater control over their lives and the capacity to influence their environment. For Doyal and Gough (1991), autonomy is one of two basic needs they consider objectively applicable to all human beings. Furthermore, according to Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), autonomy is one of three requirements which must be satisfied before a person can achieve intrinsic motivation (the strongest form of motivation). Therefore, autonomy matters because it is empowering and demonstrates to young people that they have a voice that is both heard and worthy of being heard (Martinek and Hellison, 1997; Quinn, 1999).
Competence
Competence is about building and developing skills (Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Particularly, it is about young people learning and practicing new skills (Quinn, 1999) which they can gradually start to master. Tied to the acquisition of new abilities is Bandura’s (1997) concept of self-efficacy: a person’s belief in their potential to carry out an activity. Consequently, competence can be broadly summarised as ‘I feel I can do this activity’. This matters for young people’s development because an emphasis on competence and mastery, as Martinek and Hellison (1997, p. 42) outline, enhances youths’ “self-confidence, self-worth, and ability to contribute”.

²⁸ The lexicon used in the literature of youth needs also refers to ‘youth development’ or ‘youth growth’, and in some cases, ‘well-being’. Though these concepts are not strictly synonymous, they all address the same overarching subject: what do adolescents require to blossom into healthy and happy adults?

Physical and psychological safety
<p>Safety entails avoidance from physical or psychological abuse, neglect, or harm (Sinclair and Little, 2002). For Donal and Gough (1991), physical health is the second need (alongside the aforementioned autonomy) that is universally applicable to all people. Safety is also important for Maslow (1943), and according to him can only be secured once the most basic of all needs – physiological needs – are met. Whilst physical safety entails protection from bodily harm, psychological safety refers to freedom from emotional abuse (Martinek & Hellison, 1997). Safety matters because it is an important aspect of well-being (Fattore, Mason and Watson, 2007) and can be characterised by “being with other people, having parents that protect you and treat you well, [and] having a personal, safe place to be” (p. 18).</p>
Relationships
<p>Developing meaningful relationships is about spending “quality time with caring adults and with other young people” (Quinn, 1999, p. 97). For Pringle (1980), relationships can satisfy the needs for love, physical care and affection, whilst for Noddings (1984) relationships are the conduit through which people can care for each other. Care matters because it is about “seeing and responding to need [...] so that no-one is left alone” (Gilligan, 1993, p. 62). Additionally, nurturing relationships matter because they can help young people navigate the turbulent waters of adolescence (Larson et al., 2002) by providing youths with the psychosocial benefits of Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) or Social Capital (Coleman, 1994; Putnam, 2000). Attachment theory suggests a young person’s view of themselves and of the world hinges on the quality of relationships with their primary caregivers, whilst social capital illustrates how a youths’ capacity to advance in life is closely associated to the breadth and richness of their social networks.</p>
Education (learning experiences)
<p>Education, or learning experiences, refers to young people’s need to “build academic, vocational, personal, and social skills” (Quinn, 1999, p. 103). The literature addresses educational experiences holistically by considering aspects like the development of language and communication (Lipina, Simonds and Segretin, 2011), the acquisition of knowledge and vocational awareness (Barton, Watkins and Jarjoura, 1997), and the growth academic ability in relation to math or reading competency (McBride Murry et al., 2011). These interpretations of the ‘need for education’ arguably converge on two goals: that education matters because it offers new experiences (Pringle, 1980) as well as appropriate stimulation (Black, 1990, cited in Seden, 2002).</p>

Stable structures
The key characteristic of stable structures is that they have clear limits (Quinn, 1999) which are enforced consistently. Within a stable structure, routines and rituals are carried out in a predictive manner (Evans et al., 2005). This means that young people can develop a sense of expectations and consequences for their and others' actions. Though there is a danger of making a stable structure <i>too</i> structured (Axford and Morpeth, 2013) and thus stripping a young person of their autonomy, stable structures matter because operating in an environment one can predict is associated to healthy socio-emotional development (Evans et al., 2005).
Sense of belonging and being regarded as important or valuable
A sense of belonging broadly refers to young people being "treated as resources and felt needed" (Quinn, 1999, p. 104). Addressing adolescents' needs by offering them a space where they could 'belong to' were aspects further highlighted by Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) as well as Barton et al. (1997). This 'sense of belonging' is instilled by listening to young people's views (Walsh et al., 2011) and treating them as valuable members of society (Konopka, 1973). Maslow (1943) conceptualises being 'valuable' through the label of self-esteem. Consequently, being regarded as important matters because it enhances young people's self-esteem and self-respect.
Identity development
The need for identity development is about young people being able explore who they are as well as deciding what value system they want to follow (Konopka, 1973). To help adolescents on this journey, Martinek and Hellison (1997) suggest it is important to respect each youth's individuality and cultural differences. This is because, as Kennedy (1989, p. 21, cited in Martinek and Hellison, 1997) argues, "in the end, everyone's culture is different because everyone's experience is different". Identity development also entails young people reflecting on how they present themselves to society (Sinclair and Little, 2002) and being able to 'experiment' (through trial and error) various forms of presentation (Konopka, 1973). Therefore, positive identity development matters because satisfaction with one's identity is associated to enhanced well-being (Fattore, Mason and Watson, 2007).
Environmental context and exploration
The need for environmental context and exploration refers to young people having access to settings and places which enhance their well-being (Fattore, Mason and Watson, 2007). Not only does this refer to youth's living environment (such as their house and neighbourhood) (Sinclair and Little, 2002), it is

also about considering the setting where leisure activities are carried out. Environmental context is in many respects a hybrid of the needs for safety and a sense of belonging. This is because when young people operate within a space that is both safe and where they feel comfortable, they are capable of exploring their own identity as well as developing competence at an activity.

Looking positively to the future

Looking positively to the future entails helping young people “envision possible futures for themselves, especially future vocational and avocational activities which they may not see as relevant for their lives, and ways to get there” (Martinek & Hellison, 1997, p. 42). The significance of this future-orientation is tied to the desire for self-fulfilment within Maslow’s (1943) level of self-actualisation. To achieve a goal requires identifying a target in the first place, and then planning forwards to reach it. This is why, for Donnelly and Coakley (2002), it is important to instil hope for the future in young people; it matters because “aspiring to be OK in the future” Fattore et al. (2007, p. 18) is tied to youths’ well-being.

Community links

Forging community links is about ensuring “teenagers have opportunities to contribute their talents to the larger community” (Quinn, 1999, p. 106). Community relationships can happen through two forms of social capital (Putnam, 2000): ‘bonding’ (homogenous social networks, such as young people meeting other young people) or ‘bridging’ (heterogeneous social networks, like young people befriending the elderly). Consequently, a young person’s community encompasses their school and family (Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003) as well as the people in their neighbourhood (including local politicians and businesses) (Martinek and Hellison, 1997). Developing community links matters because it helps to develop a sense of belonging.

Ability to contribute

The ability to contribute is characterised by what Konopka (1973) refers to as a sense of responsibility within a relationship of equals. Giving a young person responsibility – a key need, according to Pringle (1980) – is indicative of trusting the young person with whatever they have to offer. This trust, in turn, results in a youth’s ability to contribute because they can see that their participation is meaningful (Quinn, 1999) instead of tokenistic. Therefore, the ability for a young person to contribute matters because it entails “making a difference, advocating for a cause, making meaningful decisions and accepting responsibility for mistakes” (Pittman et al., 2003, p. 11)

Development of social, emotional, and cognitive components

The need to develop social, emotional, and cognitive aspects amalgamates some needs earlier discussed (like relationships, or education), however, it deserves separate recognition. This need refers to focusing on “emotional, social, educational, and economic needs – in other words, on the whole person rather than on a single issue” (Martinek & Hellison, 1997, p. 42). Barton et al. (1997) – seconded by Sinclair and Little (2002) – further this point by highlighting the value of developing appropriate attitudes, skills, and behaviours. Therefore, young people’s need to develop their social, emotional, and cognitive aspects (“their bodies, hearts, and minds” – Quinn, 1999, p. 97) matters because it is a precursor to unlocking a person’s full potential. Maslow (1943) describes reaching this level in his hierarchy as achieving ‘self-actualisation’.

In summary, the thirteen needs relevant to socio-economically disadvantaged young people are autonomy, competence, physical and psychological safety, relationships, education, stable structures, a sense of belonging, identity development, environmental context and exploration, looking positively to the future, community links, ability to contribute, and the development of social, emotional, and cognitive components. The extent to which these needs can be met is important to ensure socio-economically disadvantaged young people’s healthy psychological and social development. However, not all spaces are conducive to meeting adolescent’s needs. Formal education, hamstrung by a rigid and hierarchical approach, frequently struggles to address young people’s needs (Morgan, Morgan and Kelly, 2008; Van der Linden, 2015; Yasunaga, 2014). Comparatively, as I outline next, non-formal education is well situated to shine where formal education appears to fail.

Non-formal education: The route to meeting young people’s needs?

Non-formal education (NFE) is in a stronger position to meet disadvantaged young people’s needs than formal education (FE) is. Beyond the hierarchical approach towards relationships which characterises formal education (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974), FE is hampered by the neoliberal standardised performance indicators which prioritise league tables, rankings, high stakes testing, and

individual responsibility (Carr, 2016b; Torrance, 2017). The limitations of formal education are captured by Van der Linden (2015, p. 55):

“Unfortunately, due to globalisation and the influence of the social economic structure, the dominant type of learning is not that holistic. It is rather functionalistic, serving the capitalist system and only considering the part of the learner that is of interest to the system instead of including the person as a whole.”

NFE offers an alternative approach; one that is more holistic and based on the localised needs of the learners (Taylor, 2006). As I previously quoted Ridge (2011, p. 82) saying, “the social and relational effects of poverty are clearly fundamental issues for low-income children themselves”. Socio-economic disadvantage is about more than just material deprivation; it encompasses a range of ‘binds’ – social problems – which can exacerbate social exclusion²⁹ (Brown, 2015). Meeting young people’s needs is a way of addressing these ‘binds’, and thus fostering social inclusion. For instance, NFE can address the ‘relational effects of poverty’ by providing a space where meaningful human relationships can flourish (Morgan, Morgan and Kelly, 2008). By minimising the hierarchical relationships between learner and facilitator and offering a less structured space (Taylor, 2006), NFE is likelier to meet the needs for relationships as conceived by Noddings (1984). For Noddings, human relationships are underpinned by an ethic of care which is bottom-up and context-specific to each individual. This stands in opposition to neoliberal approaches, where care is conceived in a top-down, a-contextual manner.

A further way in which NFE can improve young people’s lives is by addressing three basic human needs which formal education struggles to address: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Participation in NFE activities is voluntary (Taylor, 2006), indicating young people *choose* whether to get involved. Furthermore, this element of choice is frequently associated to the desire to develop

²⁹ I addressed a range of these social problems in the section ‘socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents’

competence in an activity. Combined with NFE's emphasis on developing relationships, fulfilling the basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness leads to *intrinsic* motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Deci and Ryan, 2008). This is the strongest form of motivation possible, whereby the purpose of doing an activity is to do the activity itself. Contrarily, formal education, by not meeting at least one of the three basic needs, promotes *extrinsic* motivation: participation in a task to avoid punishment (exclusion from school) or for an external reward (getting good marks to progress into the next academic year).

Though these examples are not exhaustive, they indicate why NFE is better situated to meet socio-economically disadvantaged young people's needs than FE is:

"Non-formal education is an important means to acquiring knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required for further learning, better well-being and improved livelihoods" (Yasunaga, 2014, p. 16).

Of critical importance is the value placed on 'better well-being and improved livelihoods', especially considering formal education has limited scope to address such aspects amidst its concern with meeting standardised performance indicators. Though youth charities, like schools, are imbued by neoliberal governmentality, it *seems* that operating in the field of NFE better situates charities to support socio-economically disadvantaged young people's development. Nevertheless, youth charities are also governed by neoliberal values, so the extent to which they can meet adolescents' needs requires interrogation. This is one of the foci of my study, and one which will help me make inroads into the debate about the purpose of non-formal education in the neoliberal context. Before proceeding to discuss youth sport programmes as the NFE activity provided by SportHelp, it is important to be realistic about whether a single NFE programme could ever satisfy all 13 human needs I previously described. For Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003, p. 97), the answer is 'no':

"One program, even an extraordinarily good program, cannot do it all. Young people do not grow up in programs, but in families, schools, and neighbourhoods. Our best chance of positively

influencing adolescent development through programs lies in increasing the web of options available to all youth in all communities.”

Youth sport programmes

In the UK, sport is very popular. Adopting a Darwinian perspective, one could argue sport’s pervasive and almost ubiquitous presence in a plethora of social spheres illustrates its adaptability. In other words, sport is everywhere. Its chameleonic versatility can be appreciated in how it has successfully permeated spheres as diverse as financial markets (sport merchandise, sport specific shops, elite sport clubs), media outlets (broadcasted and printed), the labour force (coaches, sport scientists, pundits), health discourse (promoting physical activity), schools (compulsory PE lessons), municipal communities (after school sport clubs), welfare (youth organisations which offer sport provision, like charities), social spaces (construction of gyms and sport facilities), leisure time (watching or playing sports), politics (via staging mega events like the Olympics or World Cups) and, of course, academia. Few other elements of society can claim such a feat.

These diverse areas of society all came together when the UK hosted one of the biggest sport mega-events on the planet: the Olympics. London 2012 was broadly received with enthusiasm and joy, a feeling media outlets frequently referred to as the ‘Olympic spirit’ (Dalton, 2012; Hough, 2012). However, what is particularly noteworthy about London 2012 is that despite the magnitude and success of the event, it did not constitute a major shift or pivotal moment for the UK’s attitude towards sport. This is because sport values and practices have become pervasive – even hegemonic – through the proliferation of ‘storylines’:

“Sport, as is clear from even a cursory review of contemporary policy, is replete with deeply entrenched ‘storylines’, not only that elite success has a powerful demonstration effect on the

mass of the public, but also that sport participation has a positive impact on the behaviour of the young, that international sport improves relations between nations and that sport can strengthen community integration. Storylines are not necessarily false, but their persistence and impact is not related to the quality or quantity of evidence available” (Houlihan et al., 2009, p. 5).

The ‘storylines’ I am particularly concerned with are those that envisage sport as a panacea for social regeneration. This view contends that sport is particularly capable (and suitable) to support socio-economically disadvantaged young people’s development (Anderson, 2010; Spaaij, 2009). Using sport as a type of non-formal education activity, the ‘sport as a panacea’ perspective subscribes to the belief that adolescents’ needs (such as the thirteen needs I outlined earlier) can be met through youth sport programmes (YSPs). Additionally, these ‘storylines’ of sport are frequently embedded with neoliberal values of responsabilisation. Consequently, in what is to come I dissect youth sport programs as an NFE activity by outlining what constitutes a youth sports programme and illustrating how the sport policy context in the UK has been shaped by neoliberal governmentality. Finally, I tie together youth sport programmes alongside non-formal education, charities, and socio-economic disadvantaged young people.

What is a youth sport programme?

The popularity of sport as a non-formal education activity is rooted in sport being considered a ‘hook’ for young people (Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth, 2005; Coatsworth and Conroy, 2007; Sherry, Schulenkorf and Chalip, 2015). In the UK, the latest Active Lives Survey report (Sport England, 2017A) suggests 4.7 million young people (aged 16-24) are ‘active’ (meaning they do at least 150 minutes of exercise a week). Despite the infancy of the Active Lives Survey, its preliminary findings align with the results from the now defunct Active People Survey: adolescents seem to do more exercise than adults (Sport England, 2014). Consequently, given there is a ‘demand’ for sport, and considering how much sport

is part of the fabric of UK society, it is unsurprising that that 23% of all youth charities³⁰ focus on the creation and implementation of youth sport programmes. In addition to these YSPs being categorised in four groups, they are also shaped by neoliberal governmentality.

According to Petitpas et al. (2005), there are four types of youth sport programmes, each designed with a specific goal in mind. Of the four, three are particularly applicable – and widely used – to help socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents. The fourth is the least relevant to these causes (and by implication, my research), yet it is worth mentioning for completeness. This approach to YSPs has a focus on teaching sport skills, tactics and techniques as an end unto itself. These programmes are often associated to sports clubs, where the purpose of the club is to teach youths their sport or physical activity of choice. These programmes are largely irrelevant to my research because their attitude towards sport can be crudely summarised as ‘sport is *just* about sport’. Contrarily, the other three types of YSPs envisage ‘sport as being *more* than just sport’. They are often used by charities or other voluntary organisations (under the banner of ‘sport for change’) by treating sport as a form of (1) prevention, (2) intervention, or (3) teaching life skills.

The prevention and intervention approaches to youth sport programmes overlap in many respects, and can therefore be analysed together. Whilst prevention refers to engaging disadvantaged youths in sport *before* they develop harmful habits, intervention programmes aim to stop *existing* harmful habits (Petitpas et al., 2005). Despite the good intentions behind these programmes, for Coakley (2002, p.16) they are problematic because prevention and intervention approaches promote a “social control and deficit-reduction dream”. Said differently, such YSPs take a ‘deficit reduction’ stance (Fraser-Thomas and Côté, 2009) towards disadvantaged young people, assuming they need to be ‘fixed’ (intervention) or ‘saved’ (prevention). This rhetoric echoes the tenets of responsabilisation as a technology of neoliberal

³⁰ 22,555 youth charities focus on the ‘promotion of amateur sport’ out of a total 94,076 youth charities. Source: Register of charities.

governmentality by individualising the social and encouraging young people to ‘fix’ themselves. Thus, intervention and prevention programmes are effective tools to govern adolescents ‘at a distance’ by reducing social problems to individual ones.

An example of how prevention and intervention YSPs govern young people’s lives can be found in midnight leagues. Midnight leagues, as their name suggests, are sport leagues (usually football or basketball) which take place in socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, at midnight. The goal is to encourage young people who are on the streets to play sports instead of participating in crime, substance abuse, or loitering (Hartmann, 2016). Since the football or basketball courts are usually encased by fences, it is easy to conjure an image of midnight leagues as containment cages for young people. This analogy is illustrative of how midnight leagues promote neoliberal *individual* responsibility whilst masking underlying *structural* issues:

“it is much easier, and cheaper, to occupy the time of young people identified as ‘at risk’ than it is to deal with the real problems of poverty, impoverished neighbourhoods, lack of role models, poor education, and other issues. These programmes are funded precisely because they are inexpensive, and perhaps because the middle classes who cannot afford to live in gated communities may sleep better at night knowing that the ‘dangerous’ populations are playing basketball” (Donnelly and Coakley, 2002, p. 12).

The ramifications of prevention and intervention programmes ignoring social and structural problems also serves to re-enforce social exclusion (Kelly, 2011). This is because such programmes do not tackle the root cause of young people’s exclusion, they attempt to ‘patch-up’ the symptoms. Consequently, prevention and intervention programmes place the onus of responsibility on young people whilst largely ignoring how they are conditioned by complex, contextual social forces (Coalter, 2010; Kelly, 2011) such as family income or housing quality (Haudenhuyse et al., 2012). This approach, which is in

keeping with a neoliberal ethos, individualises social problems by reminding adolescents that it is up to *them* not to abuse substances or engage in crime. Furthermore, charities also reproduce this individualistic discourse by implying that young people's *choices* to engage in negative behaviours are the barriers holding adolescents back from reaching their full potential (Laureus, 2011; Sport4Life, 2014).

The final type of youth sport programme, teaching life skills, entails instilling positive psychosocial attitudes and behaviours in young people (Petitpas et al., 2005). Examples of this positive development would be often-used 'buzzwords' like teamwork, self-discipline and leadership. According to Danish (2002), life skills programmes pose an immediate challenge: whilst terms like leadership or self-discipline are frequently discussed, they are rarely critically examined or defined. This point is passionately expressed by Larson (2000):

"Such unbridled enthusiasm, however, has a long history in the discussion of youth activities and has often strained credibility. Proponents have frequently made uncritical claims that youth activities build character, redirect aggressive impulses, and promote initiative, without subjecting these claims to the test of falsifiability. We must ask, then, where is the beef? What is the evidence that participation in these activities is related to measurable developmental change?" (p. 175).

To respond to Larson (2000), 'the beef' is often found in anecdotal evidence espoused by individuals Giulianotti (2004) refers to as 'sport evangelists'. These 'evangelists' wholeheartedly believe in the 'storylines' of sport, and that sport is inherently capable of teaching teamwork, leadership, or determination. Unfortunately, what 'sport evangelists' fail to appreciate is that life-skills YSPs are problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it is important to interrogate *why* specific attributes are championed in such programmes. Emphasis on leadership, teamwork, and determination is not random; they constitute 'social values' (Rudd, 2005) which are prized in a neoliberal "ideology that is heavily based on capitalistic economy and 'mentality'" (p. 206).

Secondly, life skills YSPs promote a “social opportunity and privilege promotion dream” (Coakley, 2002, p. 17). By ‘privilege promotion’ Coakley refers to the belief that there is a correlation between self-improvement (acquiring life skills) and upwards social mobility. This correlation is infused with neoliberal governmentality rhetoric because it establishes a link between entrepreneurial self-improvement and becoming a ‘good citizen’ (Kumar, 2012). Those young people who hone their life skills, who are better at ‘teamwork’ or ‘problem solving’, are equated to being better citizens. Once again, these life skills are not arbitrary; they are an adult-designed template of what it means to be a productive citizen (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2016). Therefore, the underlying message is that hard work and the achievement of life skills is enough to become ‘successful’, where ‘success’ is determined by neoliberal standards such as the accumulation of wealth or upward social mobility. Coakley’s earlier use of the word ‘dream’ is reminiscent of comedian George Carlin’s (2005) powerful rejoinder about the ‘American Dream’ and the myth of social mobility through hard work:

“It is called the American Dream because you have to be asleep to believe it.”

A final point of contention around life skills is an issue I have previously touched upon: the assumptions that life skills are a) implicitly acquired by youths *because* they play sport (Danish, Taylor and Fazio, 2003; Coalter, 2007A) and b) naturally transferable from the sporting domain to the rest of adolescents’ lives (Danish et al., 2002; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom and Skille, 2014; Turnnidge, Côté and Hancock, 2014). If mere *participation* in sport were to instil life skills such as confidence, responsibility, or assertiveness (SUPER, 2002; The First Tee, 2014), then it should follow that those who play more sport will become better human beings. A cursory look at professional athletes (particularly, footballers) is enough to dispel this logic; few would look towards professional football players as shining examples of personhood. Consequently, if athletes who have devoted their lives to sport have failed to acquire ‘life

skills' simply from *participation*, it is unreasonable to believe young people (who are exposed to sport for a fraction of the time, relatively) will be capable of it.

Having outlined the three types of youth sport programmes which adhere to the 'sport for good' mantra (prevention, intervention, and life-skills), what becomes apparent is how such programmes, through the technology of responsibilisation, can govern and re-shape disadvantaged young people's notions of personhood. By internalising individual responsibility, one comes to understand 'good personhood' as somebody who takes an entrepreneurial, self-improvement approach to their life. Despite this, some YSPs have positive impacts on young people. This has less to do with sport *itself*³¹, and more to do with sport being a popular non-formal education activity which can take a holistic approach towards supporting socio-economically disadvantaged young people:

"If we wish to advance our understanding of how sport practices could generate wider outcomes, first and foremost we need to know what socially vulnerable young people's concrete life situations are" (Haudenhuyse et al., 2014, p. 149).

"Making dreams happen through sports can be tricky [...] it depends on our knowledge of the experiences of young people rather than on our knowledge of sports" (Coakley, 2002, p.25).

"The difference between whether sports build character or character disorders has less to do with the playing of the sport and more to do with the philosophy of the sport organization, quality of coaching, nature of parental involvement, and participants' individual experiences and resources" (Petitpas et al., 2005, p. 63).

³¹ After all, why would we assume volleyball *itself* possesses inherent qualities that foster critical thinking or empathic maturation? (Fullinwider, 2006).

“The research results indicate that ‘Vencer’ [a YSP aimed at fostering personal and social skills] provides a context for meaningful social interaction, which serves as a basis for the development of social capital. At the most basic level, it provides a space where young people can get together and create and maintain friendships. The informal nature of the sporting activities and the common focus and teamwork involved allows open and democratic relationships between young people and educators” (Spaaij, 2012, p. 88).

Despite this holistic and NFE approach, YSPs are also tinted with a neoliberal hue which promotes individual responsibility and New Public Management. This should not be surprising considering, as I will now address, that the UK sport policy context has been coated in the same neoliberal rhetoric as the UK’s policies for charities and socio-economically disadvantaged young people.

Youth sport in the UK: A policy context

Since the 1970s, successive UK governments have taken an increasing interest in sport policy (Bloyce and Smith, 2010). Though these policies span over a range of areas, such as considerations of sport during PE, what recent policies have repeatedly established is the government’s belief that sport is not *just* about sport; it is about *more* than sport:

“One consequence of the increasing intervention of government in sport policy-making has been that sport policy priorities have shifted away from the development of sport and achievement of sport-related goals towards the use of sport to achieve other desired social objectives” (Bloyce & Smith, 2010, p. 80).

These ‘desired social objectives’ are frequently united under the banners of ‘sport for social change’ (Sherry, Schulenkorf and Chalip, 2015) or ‘sport for good’ (Collins, 2010). These arenas focus on using sport as a means of fostering social inclusion and addressing socio-economic disadvantage, or, as I

put it earlier, using sport as a panacea for social regeneration. However, my prior examination of youth sport programmes suggests the need to carefully interrogate *what* and *how* the ‘desired social objectives’ are met. An examination of UK sport policy reveals how, since 2008, sport policies and strategies have been shaped by the neoliberal technologies of New Public Management and responsabilisation. In turn, these strategies re-configure the content of charity-run youth sport programmes.

The arrival of Tony Blair and New Labour in 1997,

“Demanded a wide menu of external economic and social benefits from social programmes including sport, such as: adding to social cohesion; improving health; encouraging lifelong learning; combating social exclusion; and helping economic, physical and social regeneration” (Collins, 2010, p. 369).

Parts of these goals were framed in ‘*A Sporting Future For All*’ (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2000), particularly in terms of using sport so “our most disadvantaged communities can enjoy the health and social benefits that participation in sport brings” (p. 2). This strategy paved the way for ‘*Game Plan*’ (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2002), whereby there was an emphasis on ‘sport for good’ (Collins, 2010). The goal of the strategy was to increase participation levels in sport given its perceived health and social benefits. However, the strategy was cautious in over-selling what sport could achieve:

“Some practitioners also report positive results from schemes that use sport to help reduce crime and social exclusion. However, systematic evidence is lacking here and we must improve our understanding of the linkages if policy is to be fully effective” (p. 45)

The ‘sport for good’ rhetoric shifted in 2008 – despite Labour still remaining in power – to ‘sport for sport’s sake’ (Collins, 2010). The new strategy, ‘*Playing to Win*’ (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2008), was underpinned by a neoliberal tone fostering competition (“when you play sport, you play

to win” – p. 00³²) and New Public Management discourse. This was characterised by frequent indications that National Governing Bodies³³ will “be empowered in a new way to develop their sports, but will also be more accountable for what they are delivering” (p. 13) through demonstrating “greater responsibility and accountability for [the funding they receive] – particularly in terms of delivery of outcomes” (p. 15). Thus, National Governing Bodies were being re-shaped through the technologies of New Public Management and responsabilisation.

Following the New Labour government, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition (2010-2015) published *‘Creating a Sporting Habit for Life’* (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2012) with the aim of using London 2012 as a vehicle to raise participation levels and “break down the barriers that, until now, have prevented young people from continuing their interest in sport into their adult life” (p. 3). Following the trend established by the previous sport strategy (*‘Playing to Win’*), *‘Creating a Sporting Habit for Life’* was impregnated with NPM and responsabilisation rhetoric. The executive summary captured the strategy’s aim to develop “a lasting legacy of competitive sport in schools” (p. 4) and focus on youth in sport via “payment by results” and the “withdrawal of funding from governing bodies that fail to deliver agreed objectives” (p. 5). Furthermore, in attempting to broaden the offering of sport to voluntary groups, the strategy ring-fenced £50m that “will be made available in funds which will be open to well-run sports clubs” (p. 5). To bolster participation, part of the strategy’s remit was to help disadvantaged youths “on the very margins of our society into sports projects that also teach them vital life skills” (p. 13). Here, once again, specific life skills – what Rudd (2005) calls ‘social values’ – are championed as a means of addressing the presumed ‘deficits’ of socio-economically disadvantaged young people.

³² That was the strategy’s opening sentence.

³³ National Governing Bodies (NGBs) are “typically independent, self-appointed organisations that govern their sports through the common consent of their sport” (Sport England, 2017b).

The most recent sport strategy, *'Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation'* (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2015), cements the return to a 'sport for good' approach³⁴. A key difference between this strategy and previous ones was the replacement of how engagement in sport was measured. Since the year 2000, there had been an emphasis on quantifying participation levels; instead, *'Sporting Future'* focuses on five outcomes: "physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development" (p. 9). The strategy was also ground-breaking in that it values broader engagement in sport, such as people who volunteered or watch sport. Despite these advances, *'Sporting Future'* is designed as a policy that operates under an "'arm's length principle'" (p. 12). This is reminiscent of Rose's (2000) conceptualization of neoliberal governmentality as government 'at a distance'. Akin to the previous policies, *'Sporting Future'* constitutes a technology of New Public Management and responsabilisation:

"Those investing public money in sport and physical activity will develop common appraisal and evaluation approaches for all proposals and investments, based on the outcomes and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in this strategy. These will be used to judge the relative merits of applications for funding, and the likelihood of them delivering this strategy's five outcomes" (p. 17).

Two aspects are worthy of consideration when looking back at the UK sport policy context. Firstly, the extent to which neoliberal technologies of New Public Management and responsabilisation have shaped the policies mimics the extent to which neoliberal values have re-configured what constitutes a 'charity' and what constitutes 'socio-economic disadvantage'. It is a yet a further indication of the all-reaching grasp of neoliberalism, and how it governs our lives. Secondly, other than a handful of caveats

³⁴ As evidenced by the Prime Minister's foreword: "First, we will be much bolder in harnessing the potential of sport for social good" (p. 6).

in *'Game Plan'*, all the sport strategies demonstrated a powerful belief in the 'storylines' (Houlihan, Bloyce and Smith, 2009) of sport and the presumed inherent value of sport. In turn, this has led to the assumption that sport is a tool *ideally suited* to help socio-economically disadvantaged young people develop; that sport is a tool capable of social regeneration. However, if sport is to be used as a non-formal education activity to support adolescents' development, then

"There is a need to think more clearly, analytically and less emotionally about "sport" and its potential [...] If sport policy and practice are to mature and their interventions to become less ambitious and more effective there is a need to 'demythologise' or 'de-centre' sport" (Coalter, 2007, p. 7).

This 'demythologisation' requires careful consideration of what impact sport can have on young people's lives. As Houlihan et al. (2009) said when talking about the 'storylines' of sport, "storylines are not necessarily false" (p. 5). This means that sport strategies and youth sport programmes can (and have) done some good, such as providing social and psychological benefits for adolescents in a young offenders' institution (Parker, Meek and Lewis, 2013), reducing social exclusion (Kelly, 2011), or empowering communities whilst promoting healthy lifestyles (Sherry, Schulenkorf and Chalip, 2015). However, these three pieces of research echo the sentiment which imbues the majority of the youth sport literature: there are more forces at play than *just* sport. Do positive effects emerge *because* of sport, *in spite of* sport, or *in addition to* sport? I will address this question in the next section, where I tie together non-formal education, charities, socio-economic disadvantaged young people, and youth sport programmes.

Youth sport as a non-formal education activity, delivered by UK charities, for socio-economically disadvantaged young people

I ended the previous section with the question ‘do the positive effects of youth sport programmes emerge *because of sport, in spite of sport, or in addition to sport?*’ To answer this question, we need to consider the context a youth sport programme operates in (Coakley, 2016). Youth sport programmes do not simply ‘happen’; there is always an agenda, ideology and funding source behind *every* initiative (Spaaij, 2009). As I have illustrated throughout my chapter, neoliberal governmentality dominates the UK landscape and, despite a popular rhetoric which may argue that sport is not political, the previous policy context analysis shows otherwise. In the words of Coakley (2009, p. 466):

“Politics include all processes of governing people and administering policies, at all levels of organisation, both public and private. Therefore, politics are an integral part of sport.”

With this in mind, I can now draw together all the pieces I have explored throughout this literature review. Non-formal education, through a more informal approach, is well situated to address the needs of socio-economically disadvantaged young people whom formal education may not supporting. A key provider of NFE in the UK, youth charities, frequently use sport as an activity to improve the lives of socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents. However, charities need to fight for funds in a hyper-competitive market, where the ‘rules’ for funding are dictated by NPM discourse extolling accountability and target-setting. Considering charities are reliant on grants and funding from external sources (they cannot generate revenue by selling products, like for-profit enterprises), it comes as no surprise when the ‘success’ of a charity programme conforms to a neoliberal ethos (Forde et al., 2015). Intervention and prevention youth sport programmes that provide ‘tangible’ (i.e., measurable) outcomes are likelier to get funded. This is what has led charities to produce reports which highlight the success of their programmes in economic terms:

“Sport provides a return of over 5 Euros for every 1 Euro invested through savings related to reductions in crime, truancy, and ill health” (Laureus, 2012, p. 7).

If charities have to re-shape themselves and the programmes they deliver according to neoliberal governmentality – after all, there are “funded sheep and unfunded goats” (Harris et al., 2009, p. 420) – what does this *look like* on the ground? Despite a ‘social inclusion’ rhetoric, what goals and values are charity youth sport programmes likely to endorse? The answer tends to be ‘life skills’ such as teamwork, leadership, and determination instead of care, empathy, and critical thinking. Neoliberal ‘social values’ (Rudd, 2005) serve to re-fashion socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents into neoliberal citizens who abide by the free market paradigm (Spaaij, 2009; Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2016). Additionally, the notion that charity youth sport programmes must evidence their impact through quantifying intangible terms like ‘leadership’ or ‘determination’ further supports Harvey’s (2005) thesis that *all* services must be re-configured into ‘quasi-markets’ to align with how the free market operates.

Similarly, it is no coincidence that many YSPs (whether they are for intervention, prevention, or for the promotion of life skills) are aimed at helping underprivileged young people by taking a ‘deficit-reduction’ approach (Coakley, 2002; Coalter, 2012). This attitude is rooted in the neoliberal assumption that socio-economically disadvantaged young people are inherently ‘broken’ or ‘damaged’ *because* they are from a lower socio-economic background. Consequently, ‘deficit-reduction’ YSPs

“Risk legitimating a reductive analysis of [...] complex processes, whereby individual deficits and ‘self-exclusion’ are highlighted and structural inequality de-emphasised” (Kelly, 2011, p. 145).

Given the influence neoliberalism exerts over youth sports programmes, particularly those run by charities, it is important to ask whether youth sports programs cater to the needs of their adolescents or to the wants of neoliberal stakeholders. The answer to this question matters because if YSPs prioritise the motivations of those who fund them above youths’ needs, we should heed Freire’s (2001, p. 54) caution:

“Pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. It is an instrument of dehumanisation.”

Despite the voluminous body of research indicating how neoliberal governmentality re-shapes youth sports programmes and disadvantaged young people, these very studies also highlight how such YSPs are a fertile ground for the development of meaningful human relationships (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom and Skille, 2014; Coakley, 2002; Petitpas et al., 2005; Spaaij, 2012). This means that, despite promoting neoliberal values, charity youth sport programmes – a non-formal education activity – still offer *something* formal education struggles to provide. It seems like an array of young people’s needs – as I previously advanced – are somehow met, particularly in terms of relationships, autonomy (*wanting* to attend a YSP), competence (improving at sport), and a sense of belonging (*wanting* to return to the space of the YSP). How do youth charities foster (perhaps unwittingly) neoliberal values whilst still meeting young people’s needs? How do technologies of neoliberal governmentality shape the provision of these needs? Attempting to ‘tap into’ these areas is the goal of my thesis, and it is guided by the research question outlined next.

Research question and motivation for the research

I began this chapter with an account about neoliberalism and how neoliberalism, through technologies of governmentality like New Public Management and responsabilisation, governs our lives. By ‘individualising the social’, neoliberal governmentality re-shapes society into markets, or, in the case of the public sector, ‘quasi-markets’. This re-configuration is also applicable to human beings, who are encouraged to see themselves as entrepreneurs of their lives; what Foucault (2008) calls *homo oeconomicus*. One of the domains in the public sector that has been re-sculpted in the market’s image are

UK charities. Of the 183,000 registered charities, 94,000 (just over half of them) focus on supporting children and young people by providing access to a range of non-formal education activities. These activities, which can span from art to gardening, sport, or drama (to name a few) are frequently designed with one goal in mind: to meet young people's needs.

In comparison to formal education, non-formal education (informal and less hierarchical spaces, whereby participation is voluntary, and where there is an emphasis on relationship development) situate it as fertile ground to meet disadvantaged adolescents' needs. However, it is important to interrogate *how* these needs are addressed considering that charities, despite operating in the realm of non-formal education, have been re-configured by neoliberal governmentality. Whilst charities appear better equipped to meet young people's needs for relationships and autonomy than formal education, there is still an emphasis on young people 'taking responsibility' and improving their 'self-governance'.

Consequently, it is necessary to explore charities' provision of non-formal education in the neoliberal landscape. Considering almost a quarter of the UK youth charities rely on sport as a non-formal education activity, it is coherent to select it as an activity to study. Whilst the research on youth sport programmes frequently highlights how such initiatives adopt a neoliberal deficit-reduction stance – attempting to 'fix' inherently 'deficient' socio-economically disadvantaged youths – these programmes also *seem* to produce the benefits associated to non-formal education. Such benefits include meeting young people's needs for autonomy, or meaningful relationships. If this is the case, how can youth charities foster neoliberal values (albeit, unwittingly in some cases) *and* meet young people's needs? How *exactly* does neoliberal governmentality shape charities, their programmes, and the staff? To address these types of inquiries, I focused on a single UK youth sport charity – SportHelp – as a case study. My aim was to answer the following research question:

How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?

Why does asking the question matter?

Asking my question matters for various reasons. Firstly, the question aims to understand governmentality and non-formal education *in practice*. Governmentality is increasingly written about *in theory*, but there is a dearth of research exploring what governmentality *looks like*. The works of Phoenix and Kelly (2013) and Franzen (2015) mark the route to follow, but there is still a long way to go. Considering neoliberal governmentality emerges from the hybridisation with local practices (Wacquant, 2012), the governmentality literature would benefit from having a wider array of ‘local practices’ to help make sense of how neoliberalism governs our lives. Furthermore, in relation to non-formal education, Taylor (2006, p. 292) laments how

“Unfortunately, what literature is available is generally anecdotally based and often shares similar definitional sources (e.g., Coombs & Ahmed, 1974) with little critical analysis of its meaning and in-depth understanding of what actually happens in local nonformal practices.”

In addition to providing an account of non-formal education in practice, my research question matters because it directly contributes to one of the core debates in non-formal education: what is the purpose of non-formal education? Should it ‘plug’ the gaps that formal education cannot address? Should it seek to emulate the goals of formal education whilst using informal and less hierarchical approaches? To address these types of questions, we first need an understanding of how non-formal education is *currently* operating under the auspices of neoliberalism.

My question also develops the research field of youth charities. Considering the extent to which charities are part of the fabric of UK society, and how they are increasingly being relied upon to improve communities alongside local authorities and agencies, there is a comparable dearth of research on how they operate and survive in the neoliberal landscape. How does neoliberal governmentality shape the

change and continuity of youth charities? The rhetoric in the *'Social Justice: transforming lives'* white paper (Department for State and Pensions, 2012) endures today:

"Locally-designed and delivered solutions are critical here. This Government is clear that individuals and organisations working at the grassroots, from local charity and community leaders to local authorities and agencies, are best placed to make decisions about how improvements can be made to the way services are delivered in their area" (p. 11).

What do youth charities consider as 'improvements' and how are they implementing them? An appreciation of this is particularly pertinent given youth charities in the UK help thousands of socio-economically disadvantaged young people. Consequently, what does this 'help' look like? If, as the literature suggests, youth charities use sport to meet adolescents' needs whilst promoting neoliberal notions of citizenship, what effect does this have on young people?

Finally, my question matters because my research seeks to understand how SportHelp's unique structure and provision of youth sport programmes function. SportHelp is based within schools, where coaches are jointly employed by the charity and the school. This means coaches interact with young people throughout the day in both formal and non-formal spaces. This increased contact time separates SportHelp's programmes from many other traditional YSPs which traditionally occur for a few hours a week outside of both school hours and grounds. Thus, I am in a position to further empirically consolidate Hartmann and Kwauk's (2011) and Bowers and Green's (2013) calls for youth sport programmes to be about *more* than just sport:

"Sport programming must be combined with other, non-sport programming and investment"
(Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011, p. 298).

"If we build an empirical—and practical—understanding of what happens to unstructured, informal sport experiences when integrated into an organized context, we can at least begin to take a more

nuanced approach aimed at fostering long-term positive developmental environments that benefit both the system and the individual” (Bowers & Green, 2013, p. 437).

Chapter summary

My literature review outlined how the four key areas of my research – neoliberal governmentality, youth charities, socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents, and youth sport programmes – are all interconnected by the common ‘thread’ of non-formal education. More specifically, I described how neoliberal governmentality influences our lives by re-shaping what it means to be a charity, what it means to be a socio-economically disadvantaged adolescent, and what youth sport programmes should be for. The chapter culminated with the presentation of my research question, as well as a justification of why the question matters.

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter addresses the methodology and methods I used for my research project. First, I present my research question and then proceed to illustrate my ontological and epistemological stance (critical realism). I then build on the foundations of my research question and philosophical position by describing my research design: a qualitative case study of a UK charity. Subsequently, I describe my sample where as well as justifying the qualitative methods I used (interviews and observations). Following on, I address ethical considerations related to working with participants who are young people. I continue by offering a brief discussion on a section I have titled 'what went wrong and what I learned from it', before outlining how I analysed my data. I conclude with a summary of the chapter.

The research question

My thesis sought to answer the research question (RQ):

How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?

To answer this question, I gathered data from three sources: the charity's managers, coaches, and young people. Unto this end, I developed three sub-questions which could help me collect data, as well as organise my data in the results chapter. Therefore, the sub-questions I outline next are not 'research questions'; they are a vehicle I used to focus my data collection and analysis, which in turn helped me answer the research question I described above. The three sub-questions are:

- a) **What are the managers' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?**
- b) **What are the coaches' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?**

- c) What are the young peoples' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?

It might be more intuitive to view how my three sub-questions help me answer my research question through the visual representation of an inverted pyramid (**Figure 1**).

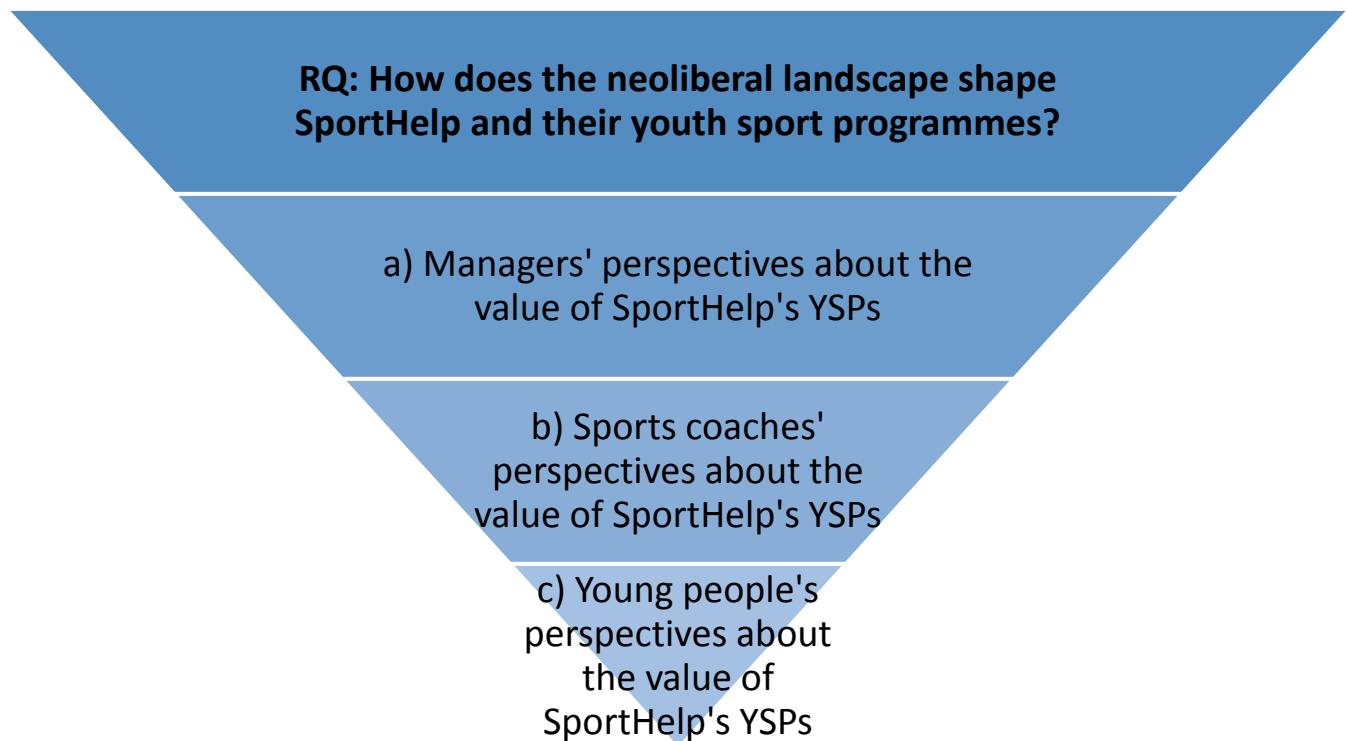


Figure 1. Inverted pyramid depicting my research question and the three sub-questions.

Philosophical stance: Critical realism

The philosophical stance underpinning my study is critical realism. Critical realism (Baskhar, 1978; 1998) emerged as a response to the weaknesses inherent in positivism (reality exists regardless of human experience) and interpretivism (reality is constructed through human experience). If we were to envisage a 'paradigm spectrum' with positivism and interpretivism at either pole, critical realism would sit in the middle (Byers, 2013). According to Danermark et al., cited in Denzin (2004):

“Critical realists agree with positivists that there is a world of events out there that is observable and independent of human consciousness. [However] Knowledge about this world is socially constructed. Society is made up of feeling, thinking human beings, and their interpretations of the world must be studied” (pp. 249-250).

Said differently, critical realists believe in a reality that is ‘out there’, but that interaction with that reality is subjective. By adhering to this world view, critical realists avoid falling into the *epistemic fallacy* trap “which reduces *being (ontology)* into *knowing (epistemology)*, and things (objects, people, events, structures) into thoughts” (Alderson, 2013, p. 48, italics in original). By collapsing ontology onto epistemology, positivist and interpretivist positions “each reduce[s] reality to human knowledge, whether that knowledge acts as lens [interpretivism] or container for reality [positivism]” (Fletcher, 2016, p. 2).

What makes critical realism a useful paradigm? On one hand, positivism struggles to ‘capture’ the complexity of social science issues such as inequality or gender because these structures form part of an *open system* (Alderson, 2013). Open systems feature two or more forces operating in them, whilst closed systems – such as a tightly controlled experiment – entail one force at play which can account for a cause-and-effect relationship. In the open system that is the social sciences (Shipway, 2011), to examine inequality, one cannot ‘control’ (and therefore stop the influence of) gender, class, or culture. Whereas interpretivism has more affinity with open systems, this paradigm’s weakness is that it shows “*how* things occur, but less often *why* they do so” (Alderson, 2013, p. 57). This means constructivist positions can provide ‘thick descriptions’, but are less helpful in seeking explanations and are directly opposed to causal analyses (Fletcher, 2017).

Contrarily, “critical realists seek to explain and critique social conditions” (Fletcher, 2016, p. 11) by making specific policy recommendations or by providing analyses of social issues. These policy recommendations, as Fletcher (2016) reminds us, are fallible. Nevertheless, critical realists can make

these recommendations or offer analyses of social issues by seeking to explain how ‘causal mechanisms’ *lead to* events or outcomes:

“Natural and social objects have underlying structures that are real and have causal mechanisms that produce events” (de Souza, 2014, p. 142).

‘Causal mechanisms’ refer to Bhaskar's (1978) stratification of reality. This stratification entails layering reality (ontology) across three levels: the *empirical*, the *actual*, and the *real*. To understand the differences between each level, I have borrowed Fletcher's (2016) helpful visual metaphor (**Figure 2**).

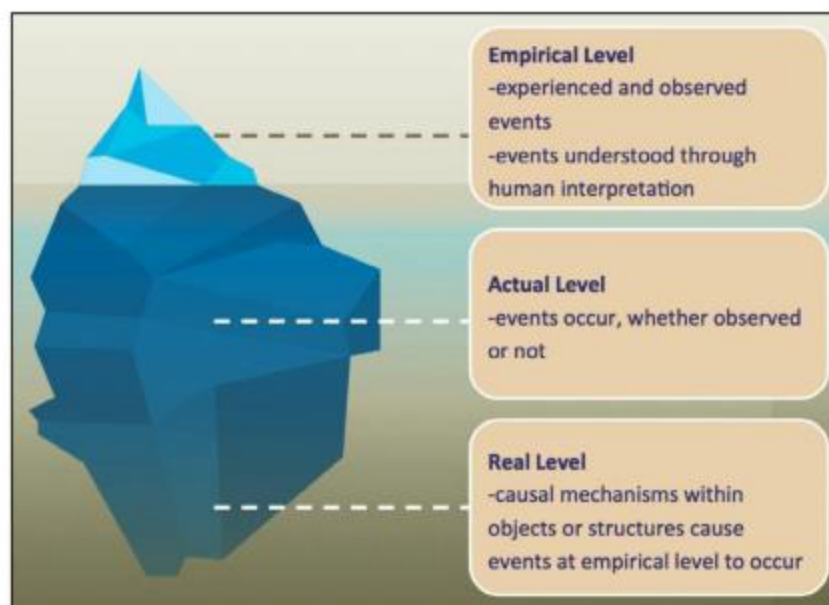


Figure 2. Fletcher's (2016) iceberg metaphor for critical realist ontology.

These three abstract levels require exemplification to make sense of them:

The who: the *empirical level* is where events can be measured or explained through human interpretation. This level is where the experiences of the actors in my research (charity managers, coaches, and youths) are collected. Specifically, I was interested in these actors' understandings of the charity's operations and youth sport programmes (i.e., events). Examples would be young peoples' views of how their coaching sessions are run, or how coaches interpreted the charity's framework to develop youths. These actors' interpretations need to be examined more deeply – beyond what participants *said*

– since they are a product of the next two levels of reality: the *actual level* and the *real level*. In relation to my inverted pyramid (**Figure 1**), data for sub-questions (a), (b), and (c) capture data at the *empirical level*.

The what: the *actual level* is where events take place regardless of whether we observe or understand them. This is the level where social structures operate, such as gender division. Women can be oppressed through gender norms, but it is an invisible oppression. Nevertheless, it still happens. For instance, girls may be excluded from participating in a sports programme because of their gender, regardless of whether other (male) participants, coaches, or even girls themselves acknowledge this is the reason for their exclusion. The exclusion may be justified based on sporting skill and mastery. This is why the data gathered at the *empirical level* (participants’ experiences) cannot be taken at face value; they must be supplemented with an approach that captures data at the *actual level*: participant observations. The data for sub-questions (b) and (c), in addition to being gathered through interviews, also stemmed from an ethnography of SportHelp’s youth sport programmes.

The why: the *real level* refers to intangible forces that *explain* how the structures at the *actual level* operate, in turn *causing* events at the *empirical level*. To find an explanation at the *real level*, we need to search for a *causal mechanism*. This mechanism is a ‘theory’ rather than physical ‘thing’. In my research, I take a critical stance on neoliberal governmentality³⁵. Consequently, this critical view on neoliberalism is one of the *causal mechanisms* which *explains* the operations, actions, and outcomes of the charity SportHelp. Additionally, the critical neoliberal context also *explains* how the charity’s actions (i.e., events) are interpreted at the *empirical level* by actors (charity managers, coaches, and youths). The *real level* aligns with my research question at the top of my inverted pyramid (**Figure 1**): how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?

³⁵ The critical realist position allows the formulation of an initial theory at the *real level* that *may* explain social phenomena. However, this theory is not set in stone: “The initial theory facilitates a deeper analysis that can support, elaborate, or deny that theory to help build a new and more accurate explanation of reality” (Fletcher, 2016, p. 4).

The stratification of reality demonstrates how a critical realist position combines elements of positivism and interpretivism. This is achieved by giving equal weighting to tangible materials (the charity's youth sport programmes) and how those tangible materials are experienced and interpreted by managers, coaches, and young people. However, criticisms can be levelled at the stratification of reality. As Fletcher (2016) points out, by seeking to *explain* individuals' interpretations through an intangible *causal mechanism* (like neoliberal governmentality), researchers run the risk of undermining their participants' accounts. This could happen by a researcher effectively suggesting to a participant that 'you said what you said because an underlying mechanism – which you do not know about, but I do – caused you to say it'.

So far, I have referred to 'structures' and have exemplified them through gender divisions. Structures refer to

"Enduring institutionalised relationships between social positions and practices located at different levels of analysis that constrain actors' capacities to 'make a difference'" (Reed, 1997, p. 25).

Structures limit an actor's agency, which means the structure-agency relationship resembles a perpetual tug-o-war for control. Examining this tug-o-war is a particular strength of critical realism because it "views structures and agents as factors that in combination determine the outcomes of social phenomena" (Byers, 2013, p. 11). For instance, a hyper-masculine sport structure can constrain an actor's capacity to show vulnerability, thus determining the outcome of a social phenomenon whereby sport can be assumed to make actors 'tough'.

In the next parts of this chapter, I outline how my method and approach to data collection aligned with a critical realist position. By adopting the relative strengths of positivism and interpretivism, critical realism is well suited for qualitative research (Alderson, 2013; Fletcher, 2017). Through acknowledging

the existence of a reality ‘out there’ which is subjectively experienced by the actors in my study, my research was able to produce recommendations at a macro-level (for policy), meso-level (for the charity SportHelp) and micro-level (for the actors: managers, coaches, and young people). More will be said about this in the Conclusion chapter.

Research design: A qualitative case study of a UK charity

To answer my research question – how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes? – in keeping with a critical realist approach, my research design needed to capture data at the *empirical* and *actual* levels. This would enable me to identify and explain what *causal mechanisms* (found at the *real* level) were influencing SportHelp. Though from the outset I took a critical stance on neoliberal governmentality as causal mechanism, I was prepared to alter this position based on what the data revealed. Prior to settling on a research design, I had three requirements to consider:

- (a) The design needed to be flexible enough to appreciate how the neoliberal context shaped events at two levels: the *actual* (SportHelp and its youth sport programmes) and *empirical* (managers’, coaches’ and young people’s perspectives about the value of SportHelp’s programmes).
- (b) The design had to permit capturing data at the *actual* (youth sport programmes) as well as the *empirical* (managers’, coaches’ and young people’s perspectives) levels.
- (c) The design had to be practically feasible in accordance to my constraints as a PhD student.

Given these parameters, I realised the best approach to answering my research question would be to focus on a single UK charity. Thoroughly exploring a single organisation would enable an in-depth understanding of multiple actors’ perspectives, offer the space for a substantial amount of participant observations, and, in turn, would allow for a detailed conceptualisation of how neoliberal governmentality

shapes a UK charity. As interesting as conducting a comparative study with a second charity would have been, I lacked the resources for this undertaking. I opted to focus on one organisation instead of scratching the surface of multiple charities. Thus, my research design took the form of a case study.

The malleability of case study methodologies – equally applicable to quantitative and qualitative research (Yin, 2014) – mean the approach is widely used (Bellamy, 2012). In addition to being well suited to a critical realist framework (Easton, 2010), what characterises a case study is that

“Almost anything can serve as a case, and the case may be simple or complex [...] we can define a case as a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. Thus, the case may be an individual, or a role, or a small group, or an organization, or a community, or a nation. It could also be a decision, or a policy, or a process, or an incident or event of some sort, and there are other possibilities as well” (Punch, 2005, p. 144).

This adaptability is a double-edged sword. In one respect, it enables wide-spread use of the case study methodology, on the other, it blurs the lines between whether it is a method, approach, strategy or design (Tight 2010). To add clarity to the muddy waters of what constitutes a ‘case’, I focused on a single organisation: a UK charity (SportHelp) that offers youth sport programs for socioeconomically disadvantaged adolescents. Previous examples of research that have opted to use organisations as case studies (e.g. Francois, 2012; Lipman, 2004; Yin, 2012) have commented on the complexities and demands of the approach with as much fervour as they have highlighted the value and importance of grasping how these organisations operate.

I mapped my methodology by borrowing from the case study research on after school programs for disadvantaged youths conducted by Hirsch et al. (2011). By focusing on a single UK sports charity, I could explore how the organisation operated within the neoliberal landscape and, in turn, explore the provision of non-formal education through sport. Thus, I chose a UK charity for the instrumental reason

(Stake 2005) that this particular case enabled me to develop an understanding of an issue (the influence of neoliberal governmentality) by conducting an analysis that was “holistic and involving a myriad of not highly isolated variables” (Stake, 2009, p. 24).

The first step in my research design was to identify the boundaries of my case. Since I chose an organisation, the confines of my case are determined by the boundaries of SportHelp. This meant I focused on elements that fell under the mantle of the charity’s domain (such as its programmes). However, studying a bounded case does not imply it exists in isolation. Instead of exploring SportHelp and its youth sport programmes in relation to another charity, my research question emphasises the examination of SportHelp in relation to the neoliberal context. Following this line of inquiry enabled me to understand *how* and *why* the charity operated as it did, as well as *how* and *why* its youth sport programmes took the forms they did.

Having conceptualised my case, I now have to clarify what phenomena I aimed to study *within* the case (Stake, 2005). To make sense of how the neoliberal landscape shaped SportHelp and its youth sport programmes, I focused my efforts on understanding two phenomena: the charity’s change and continuity, as well as how SportHelp’s sport programmes functioned. Furthermore, to unpack the latter, I developed the three sub-questions previously introduced since they helped me explore the managers’, sports coaches’, and young people’s perspectives about the value of SportHelp’s youth sport programmes.

The final component of my research design entailed the choice of a qualitative approach. The reason for this was simple: my research question is not concerned with measurement. It is about ‘capturing’ how an organisation operated within a neoliberal context by tapping into its actors’ experiences and interpretations. A qualitative approach is in keeping with a critical realist stance

“given the focus in critical realism on elucidating complex social structures and relationships (a particular strength of qualitative research)” (Schiller, 2016, p. 99).

One of the central criticisms levelled at case study research (particularly if it is a qualitative case study) is that the findings are not generalizable. How can the in-depth examination of a sole organisation contribute to knowledge and other charities in a ‘generalisable’ way? Some authors, like Flyvbjerg (2011) have argued that just because “knowledge cannot be formally generalised does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society” (p. 304). Others, such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), suggest case study research can be *transferable* instead of *generalizable*. They contend that for knowledge to be transferred from context A to context B, knowledge of both contexts is required. As a researcher working on context A without knowledge of context B, how can I know what aspects of my research are applicable to context B? Only someone in context B could transfer ideas from my context to theirs.

By adopting a critical realist stance, my research is both *generalizable* and *transferable*. Some of my findings are generalizable because critical realists subscribe to a reality independent of human perception. This is what the third level of Fletcher’s (2016) iceberg metaphor (the *real level*, found in **Figure 2**) refers to. There are *casual mechanisms* at play (such as neoliberal governmentality) which affect SportHelp and how it operates; which means these causal mechanisms are also likely to influence other charities. Therefore, I can make general recommendations that apply to other charities. Contrarily, other aspects of my research are not generalizable, they are *transferable*. This refers to the subjective data I uncovered at the *empirical level* (participants’ experiences and interpretations). The findings from this level can be used to make recommendations at a micro-level, and are therefore not generalizable to other charities. Nevertheless, other charities who read about these micro-level results can *transfer* those aspects that are suitable to their specific case.

Having presented the scaffolding of my research design (built upon the foundations of my research questions and my philosophical position), in the next two sections I address my sample and data collection methods.

Sample

In this section I have outlined who participated in my study as well as providing a justification of how I selected my sample. There were five aspects to my sampling: deciding which charity to have as my case, determining what charity managers to interview, identifying what sports coaches I would interview and observe, finding young people to interview, and justifying what sports I would observe. All names provided, including the charity's name, are pseudonyms. Though I asked the participants for what pseudonyms they wanted me to use, only a handful of the young people selected one.

The charity: SportHelp

SportHelp is a charity located in the South East of England. Its mission is to improve young people's lives through the power of sport. Specifically, the charity aims to develop life skills (pro-social attitudes and emotional behaviours) within socio-economically disadvantaged youths (8 – 18 years old) through the medium of sport. The charity's set up is unique: instead of having a series of locations young people attend in their free time, the charity operates within schools. SportHelp identifies how suitable a school is by using a range of markers for socio-economic disadvantage, such as IDACI scores³⁶ or the number of students on free school meals. However, once the charity is 'established' within a school, its sport sessions are accessible to every young person.

The organisation is over a decade old, and has grown from a football programme in a single school to offering seven different sports across more than 30 schools. In 2015/2016, the charity engaged over 7,000 young people in its sport programmes. These sport programmes are grouped into four broad

³⁶ The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) is a supplementary index to the UK Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The IDACI score measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families and ranks small areas from 1 (most deprived) to 32,844 (least deprived) – (GOV.UK, 2015) .

categories: before the start of school, during class time, at lunch time, and after school. During these sessions, sports coaches aim to mentor young people to engage “with their education and community”³⁷ whilst striving to improve adolescents’ health and fitness.

SportHelp’s coaches are based within a specific school, and their salary is subsidized partly by the charity and partly by the school. Though these coaches’ central remit is to deliver SportHelp programmes, they also count as school staff, and participate in the delivery of PE lessons and other school administrative duties. This ‘business model’ has helped SportHelp expand; whilst the charity has (until now) predominantly survived through generous economic donations from corporate partners, trusts, foundations, and friends, one of its key selling points to schools is they ‘get’ a fully-fledged sport programme for half the price of what it would otherwise cost them.

I chose SportHelp for two reasons. Firstly, it is an organisation that has grown and continues to do so. SportHelp increasingly reaches out to more young people, and the organisation wants to blaze a trail in the youth sport charity sector by establishing the “SportHelp way” (as managers have coined it). In turn, they hope other organisations will learn from them and emulate their approach. Considering SportHelp secured a significant grant from Sport England in 2016, this suggests their growth predictions are becoming a reality, and that the charity speaks to the government’s neoliberal approach to the voluntary sector. Understanding how the neoliberal landscape shapes SportHelp and its programmes is important given the growing amounts of young people they support. Furthermore, considering the charity wants to become a ‘market leader’ by promoting the “SportHelp way”, there is a need to grasp what this means. As providers of non-formal education, how do SportHelp programmes support young people? Do they meet their needs? How is this flourishing organisation shaped by neoliberal governmentality?

The second reason for choosing SportHelp is concerned with convenience sampling (Denscombe, 2014). During the first year of my PhD (2014), I spent four months with the charity as a placement student.

³⁷ Taken from one of SportHelp’s impact reports, kept anonymous.

Accessing an organisation and gaining their trust is often one of the toughest challenges of going into the field (Ryen, 2004). Since I built the foundation of a good relationship during my placement, gaining access for data collection was straightforward. Additionally, having previously established a trusting relationship meant I could focus on gathering data instead of having to build a relationship in the first place. Lastly, the reputation I gained during my placement allowed me to interview senior management figures who would have otherwise been (in all likelihood) more reticent to give me their time.

The charity managers

I selected the charity managers for my study using purposive sampling (Teddle and Yu, 2007). I was careful to select managers in a range of positions across the organisation, each with their own unique set of responsibilities. This allowed me to gather a variety of vantage points, from lower to senior management as well as administrators. My guide in this selection process was Dane, a middle manager who was part of the Evaluation and Impact team. He was also my contact within SportHelp. After describing the different types of job roles I wanted to become familiar with, Dane would suggest people he felt would be willing to give me some of their time. I interviewed the following managers³⁸:

Natalie is a long-standing trustee of the charity, having been part of SportHelp since its inception (over a decade ago). After a decade and a half in corporate finance, she began to volunteer for SportHelp whilst raising a family. Natalie is passionate about the charity's goal, and she "completely buy[s] into the vision that sport can do so much to teach children things that they aren't necessarily learning through the lack of role models". Natalie's involvement in SportHelp from day 1 means she has a deep understanding

³⁸ During the interviews, I forgot to ask the managers for how they would describe their ethnicity. What follows is my interpretation of their ethnicity. Natalie: white British; Beatrice: white British; Lisa: black West Indian/British, Dane: white British; Emily: white British.

of how the charity has grown and changed throughout the years. Her role – alongside the rest of the charity’s trustees – entails oversight regarding the strategy and direction SportHelp moves in.

Beatrice is the Chief Operations Officer, and at the time of the interview had been in post for over a year. She had previously worked as a Chief Executive of a National Governing Body and for an international sport development charity. Like Natalie, Beatrice “believe[s] in the power of sport to achieve things off the pitch”. Though she worked for a National Governing Body before taking up her post at SportHelp, she welcomed a return to the charity sector because there are less politics involved: “you have your mission [as a charity] ... if it is not related to that goal, we don’t do it”. As the Chief Operations Officer, Beatrice oversees all SportHelp’s youth sport programmes. She also represents the charity in a range of forums, such as the Sport for Development Coalition³⁹.

Lisa is a middle manager who serves as a link between sports coaches and the charity’s management. Described as a ‘young people’s champion’ by some of her colleagues, Lisa has been involved with SportHelp for twelve years. Given her background in mentoring and experience with young offenders, her initial involvement with SportHelp was in the delivery of sport programmes. After a few years, she was asked to become a middle manager – her current post. She passionately believes in the power of sport and using “sport as a catalyst in terms of giving young people an opportunity to become better and do better”. Her role is about “relationship building”: she oversees a range of SportHelp programmes within schools which she needs to ensure are running smoothly. This entails ensuring the coaches have the resources they require and making sure each programme complies with the school’s policies and procedures.

Dane is the Impact and Evaluation manager. Having always been involved in sport and, eventually, young people’s development, SportHelp met all his interests: “sport, development, evaluation, data,

³⁹ The Sport for Development Coalition is comprised of youth sport charities who come together to try to lobby more effectively for the sector.

research". Before his tenure at the charity, Dane was involved in various child development roles, such as creating and evaluating physical development curriculums for an American franchise. During the three and a half years Dane has spent at SportHelp, his role has shifted from "managing data capture" to "developing new tools, data capture tools, measurement tools". Using these tools, Dane (alongside his four colleagues working in the Impact Team) gather the outputs and outcomes of SportHelp's programmes, which can then be used for evaluation and marketing purposes.

Emily is a self-described "ethical"⁴⁰ fundraiser who has spent almost four years at the charity. Her background is in fundraising and working with disadvantaged young people. Before working at SportHelp, she was involved in overseas development (via an international aid organisation) and in some UK-based consultancy work. SportHelp appealed to her because it involves disadvantaged children, "trying to improve life skills", and – as she added – "sport for development, I think, works as an intervention". As a fundraiser, her role entails identifying funders (foundations, trusts, corporate, governmental), exploring whether SportHelp's goals meet the funders' criteria, and, if there's a "hot fit", attempting to secure funding. The charity does not "do direct marketing, door to door, face to face".

The sports coaches

The sport coaches are SportHelp's foot soldiers – they are on the front lines delivering the charity's programmes and aiming to achieve the organisation's goals. Though the military analogy is useful in a hierarchical sense, it can be misleading by suggesting that these coaches have limited agency. The coaches enjoyed a substantial degree of autonomy in terms of how they delivered their programs, how they interacted with the young people, and how they interpreted the information handed down from management (which included resistance to certain initiatives).

⁴⁰ By this she means that "I never feel we should be donor led. I feel that if an organisation says... they are interested in that, but they would prefer to see us doing something else, well, we shouldn't corrupt what SportHelp is about to get the funding"

I recruited four sports coaches using purposive sampling according to a series of conditions (Teddle and Yu, 2007): I aimed to have a gender split that was representative of SportHelp's coaching population (3 males and 1 female), to have a split across team and individual sports, to have a diversity of ethnicities (which reflected the range within the charity), and that the coaches had worked with SportHelp for at least a year. Though I was unable to recruit a female coach (one of the limitations of my study), I succeeded in meeting the rest of my criteria. Of my four coaches, two delivered a team sport (basketball) and the other two an individual sport (table tennis). Their time with SportHelp ranged from 17 months to a decade, and their ethnicities also reflected the range of ethnicities in the charity⁴¹: Karl is black British; Vincent is white British, Jake is any other white, and Alfred is any other white.

Karl has been working for SportHelp as a basketball coach for 17 months. Having played club-level basketball in the UK since the age of 17, Karl accepted a scholarship to a junior college in US to play basketball. After three years playing in the American university league, where Karl said "I learned a lot of my skills and mindset of basketball", he played in Europe for a couple of seasons until injuries forced him to play semi-professionally. He combined this playing with coaching basketball on a voluntary basis at school, and, when saw the possibility of coaching basketball full-time for SportHelp, made the switch. Karl is based at an academy school rated by Ofsted in 2014 as 'requires improvement'. He runs SportHelp basketball sessions before the start of the school day, at lunch time, and after-school, as well as delivering school PE lessons related to basketball. He coaches young people from Year 7 (aged 11) to Year 13 (aged 17).

Vincent holds two roles at SportHelp: he is a basketball coach at an academy school and a Senior Coach within the charity⁴². Having played basketball since he was 11, Vincent played all the way to

⁴¹ Unfortunately, I also forgot to ask the coaches to describe their ethnicity. The listed ethnicities are my interpretation.

⁴² This role, shared with another three other experienced coaches, is designed to act as a 'career trajectory' for coaches and serves to give coaches a 'mouthpiece' to communicate with the charity's management.

university, where he began to acquire his coaching badges. His ambition was always to get into coaching, and after finishing his university degree, he coached a women's university team alongside doing some community coaching. This experience led him to SportHelp, where he has been based at his academy (rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted in 2010) for 6 years. Like Karl, Vincent delivers basketball sessions before school, during lunch, and after school, as well as delivering basketball-related PE lessons. He works with young people aged 11 to 17, and tends to go into some young people's classes to support one of his players by ensuring they are on-task⁴³.

Jake is the longest-standing of my four coaches, having coached table tennis for SportHelp for a decade. He has played and been involved in table tennis since the age of 5, and when he migrated to the UK, held a range of posts working in restaurants and cafés for almost 7 years before starting to work for SportHelp. During this time, he continued to play table tennis at one of the UK's most elite clubs, and it was through them that he took up a post with the charity. He has seen how the charity has changed from aiming to produce table tennis players (almost a decade ago) to its focus now: supporting adolescents' development. Jake delivers table tennis sessions before school, during class hours⁴⁴, lunch times, and after school at an academy described as 'outstanding' by Ofsted in 2013.

Alfred has coached table tennis at SportHelp for over three years. Originally from an EU-nation, he used to be a professional table tennis player until an accident forced him into professional coaching. Despite his youth, he achieved success in his country's domestic league, which led him to be appointed as the nation's international table tennis coach. The financial crisis of 2008 forced him migrate to the UK, where he began coaching for SportHelp. After reviving one of SportHelp's table tennis programmes at a community school which was on the verge of shutting down, he moved on to become the performance coach for the charity's elite table tennis players. He subsequently stepped down from that role and has

⁴³ This happens for those adolescents who are misbehaving.

⁴⁴ These are sessions for one or two young people and are focused on talent development.

settled into coaching at another community school ranked 'outstanding' by Ofsted in 2013. He delivers table tennis sessions before school, at lunch times, and after school.

The young people

Six young people participated in my study as interviewees. A variety of other young people were also involved in my observations; however, they did not participate beyond informal conversations during their sports session. Selecting young people was not as straightforward as asking managers and coaches to be involved. I had to rely on the youths' gatekeepers: their coaches. In some cases, the coach selected young people they *felt* would be good participants, instead of asking someone more *suited* to the criteria I requested. In these cases (once the coach had chosen, and had gathered consent from the young person and their parents) my hands were tied. This is where the breadth of having six participants was useful to capture a variety of viewpoints from a range of backgrounds.

My aim was to achieve a representative user sample of males and females (the charity participants are 75% male, 25% female) across a spectrum of ethnicities (the organisation predominantly features Black Caribbean participants). I also wanted to have some individuals who had 'behavioural difficulties', since SportHelp frequently cited their programmes supported adolescents who misbehaved. However, the fundamental requirement was that my participants would regularly attend the sessions. As Hirsch et al. (2011) observed in their study of young people doing sport, it is difficult to conduct research with a participant who is rarely present!

Though I did not 'measure' my participants' socio-economic status during the sampling process, I relied on the sampling of SportHelp as a charity to assume a degree of disadvantage. As I mentioned previously, SportHelp operate in schools characterised by socio-economic disadvantage, indicated by IDACI scores and the amount of free school meals. However, once operating within a school, *any* young person can attend SportHelp programmes. I did not want to stigmatise adolescents or their families by

‘measuring’ their SES. Nevertheless, through my observations, I could roughly gauge the family background of young people, and the extent to which they were deprived or privileged. This is one of the strengths of qualitative work.

Despite interviewing four coaches, my time constraints only permitted the observation of three of these coaches’ sessions: Karl’s, Vincent’s, and Jake’s. I interviewed two young people per coach; six in total. Four were male, and two were female.

Orange (aged 15, White Other male) and **Fish** (aged 14, Black African male) were coached by Vincent. Vincent selected them because he felt they were committed, articulate, and good role models. Fish was born in the UK, but his parents stem from Central Africa. Despite being a keen athlete who has played tennis and badminton, he developed a deep passion for basketball ever since he started playing in Year 7 (aged 11) at SportHelp. He particularly enjoys having rivals and competing. Orange, a year older than Fish, also started playing when he was in Year 7. Basketball is also a pillar of his life, though he sometimes also plays football or computer games. He initially started playing basketball in the process of developing a friendship with (what is now) one of his good friends. Both Orange and Fish play as much basketball as they can, participating in sessions before school, at lunch time, and after school, as well as in games. They profess deep admiration and respect for their coach, Vincent.

Tia (15, Black British female) and **H.** (16, Egyptian male) belonged to Karl’s basketball sessions. Karl selected them based on them being committed students. H. started playing basketball when he was in Year 9 (aged 13) under Coach Karl’s predecessor. He participates in morning, lunch, and after-school sessions, and since he has been identified as particularly talented, he also plays for SportHelp’s elite basketball team⁴⁵. H. became interested in basketball after losing enthusiasm in football, and, like Orange and Fish, shows a deep passion for the sport. Though Tia has only been part of Karl’s programme for a year, she has taken basketball up with a vengeance. By her own admission, she used to misbehave in class

⁴⁵ This team is comprised of the best basketball players across the SportHelp schools.

(by “calling out”, for instance) until she realised she would lose her basketball privileges unless her behaviour changed. Like H., she joined basketball after being disillusioned with football, partly because the team did not win and partly because there is more of a sense of ‘family’ in the basketball team. She also participates in morning, lunch, and after-school sessions. Akin to Fish and Orange, H. and Tia showed nothing but deep respect and admiration for their coach, Karl.

Mitch (aged 13, Mixed male) and **Carys** (aged 13, Mixed female) played table tennis under coach Jake. Jake selected them both as a result of having some form of ‘behaviour difficulties’. Carys, one of three siblings, has been playing table tennis for two years. Though she began to play tentatively in Year 6, it was when she met coach Jake in Year 7 that she took the sport more seriously. This was partly due to entering Jake’s school from another primary school and thus not knowing many people; Jake introduced her to many of her peers through table tennis. Carys credits table tennis as making her more respectful, both to teachers and her family. She plays in sessions before school, the special player development sessions during class hours, lunch times, and after-school. Mitch’s table tennis participation with Jake began six months ago. As the second youngest of four siblings, he enjoys being active and playing sport. He now plays about 12 hours a week of table tennis, between morning sessions, special during-class player development trainings, lunch times, and after-school sessions. However, contradicting Jake’s selection criteria, Mitch indicated that “I don’t misbehave much. I’m a good kid”.

The sports: Basketball and table tennis

SportHelp offers schools a choice of one of seven sports. The two most popular sports are basketball and table tennis, which suited the criteria of my purposive sampling: a team sport and an individual sport. Whilst there is a substantial amount of popular speculation about the differences between team and individual sports, particularly in terms of what benefits each confers and what type of personalities they attract, the current evidence on these issues remains mixed. For instance, when

exploring whether there was a link between choosing individual or team sports, socio-economic status, and social self-efficacy levels⁴⁶, Dinç (2011) found no association. Though Laborde, Guillén and Mosley (2016) tentatively suggested individual sports may lead to a stronger personality predisposition to succeed, this research is far from conclusive. Given this mixed evidence, I selected both an individual and team sport for my study. By examining whether there were common issues which influenced different sports sessions regardless of the type of sport practiced, I undertook a more holistic exploration of SportHelp's programmes.

Choosing basketball and table tennis was also strategic for a further reason: I am familiar with basketball and entirely unfamiliar with table tennis. As a basketball player and certified coach, I could rapidly become an 'insider' with the young people by talking about basketball. For instance, in basketball, when a player shoots free throws, it is customary for them to high five his or her team mates after each shot. This is not necessarily a 'caring' or 'supportive' behaviour instilled by the coach; it is part of basketball culture. On the other hand, as a total 'outsider' in the table tennis world, I could build rapport by asking questions and showing a desire to overcome my ignorance. Overall, by choosing basketball and table tennis, my sample comprised the charity's most popular sports (and thus the sports that most represented it), both team and individual sports, and the opportunity to be an insider in one and an outsider in the other.

Methods

To identify how the causal mechanism of neoliberal governmentality shaped SportHelp, I needed to gather data at the *empirical* and *actual* levels of reality. This entailed studying different actors' views of how SportHelp operated, both as a charity and throughout its youth sport programmes. In line with the

⁴⁶ "The expectancy that students can translate their goals into actions establishing and maintaining relationships in an academic or a social environment" (p. 1418)

methodology used by Hirsch et al. (2011), I employed a mixture of qualitative methods. This practice, typical in case study research, serves to gather an understanding of how a range of phenomena and actors interact (McLeskey, Waldron and Redd, 2012; Richards, 2011) and thus accounts for data collection to be 'trustworthy' (Lincoln and Guba, 2000).

The use of multiple methods to support one another is often described in the literature as 'triangulation' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Though this term was, in its inception, associated to a positivist epistemology designed to establish corroboration amongst methods (Sandelowski, 1995), it has gradually been redefined as a "means of enlarging the landscape of their inquiry, offering a deeper and more comprehensive picture" (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 393). I prefer to justify my use of multiple methods by adopting Richardson's (2000) analogy of a crystal. She argues that triangulation inherently retains the narrow, positivist assumption that there is a fixed point (a 'truth') that we can converge upon. Instead, the crystal "combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach" (p. 13). This view aligns with a critical realist stance in that both the crystal and critical realism are suited to the study of open systems where variables cannot be tightly controlled. Just like the crystal analogy interprets reality as being more complex than converging on a single 'fixed point', so do the critical realist stratified levels of reality⁴⁷ by interpreting reality as multi-layered.

Data collection took place in two phases. Phase 1 focused on gathering an understanding of how SportHelp operated at the *empirical level* by interviewing some of the organisation's managers and eliciting their perspectives on the charity's youth sport programmes. Phase 2 was also concerned with the *empirical level* (through exploring coaches' and young peoples' perspectives about SportHelp's youth sport programmes) as well as the *actual level* (via observations of the youth sport programmes). Phase 1

⁴⁷ The *empirical level*, the *actual level*, and the *real level*.

took place before Phase 2, since the former served to create a context for the latter. Below (**Figure 3**), I illustrate how my research questions, data collection phases, and methods, all interlinked.

Data collection took place over a 9-month period. During these months, I travelled 28 times to my data collection site. Each trip entailed at least a 6-and-a-half hour return by bus, which amounted to 167 hours of travelling (approximately 7 full days). By the end of data collection, I had accumulated over 10.200km on a coach. That is approximately the distance from Bath to Vietnam.

Research question		
How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sports programmes?		
Sub-questions	Phase	Methods
a) What are the managers' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?	Phase 1	Interviews with trustees, managers, and administrators.
b) What are the coaches' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?	Phase 2	Interviews with coaches. Participant observations of sport sessions.
c) What are the young people's perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?	Phase 2	Interviews with young people. Participant observations of the sports sessions featuring the interviewed young people.

Figure 3. Outline of the methods, research phases, and questions.

Over the next pages, I outline and justify the two methods I used: semi-structured interviews and participant observations. For the sake of clarity, I have grouped the methods alongside the sub-question (a, b, and c) they helped to answer. In (a), I have addressed semi-structured interviews. For Phase 2, I discuss both (b) and (c) within each of the two methods. I first justify my use of semi-structured interviews to answer both (b) and (c), before moving on to explain how participant observation helped unearth data for (b) and (c).

Data collection Phase 1: Semi-structured interviews

a) What are the managers' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?

The purpose of this question was to uncover how the charity SportHelp operated at the *empirical* level of critical realism's stratified reality. By conducting semi-structured interviews with five managers and administrators in the charity (a trustee, the Chief Operations Officer, a lower-level manager, the Impact and Evaluation manager, and a fundraiser), I tapped into the charity's culture, ethos, and how it aimed to support socio-economically disadvantaged young people. The contents of these interviews served as a contextual backdrop for Phase 2 of my project.

Semi-structured interviews

To elicit trustees' and managers' perspectives on the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes, I conducted semi-structured interviews. Given my aim was to understand a complex issue – managers' views about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes – interviews were suitable to grasp “a detailed understanding of how things work, how factors are interconnected or how systems operate” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 186). Semi-structured interviews are characterised by a combination of open and closed questions (Gillham, 2000) which enabled me to guide the conversation around the specific issues I wanted to address whilst giving participants the opportunity to respond in a manner of their choosing. This flexibility was paramount; unstructured interviews risked shifting the conversation onto any topic, whilst a structured interview would have constrained my participants' perspectives.

Mindful of the potentially 'serious' connotations of the term 'interview'⁴⁸, I asked my participants to replace the term 'interview' with 'informal conversation'. Though this set a more relaxed tone to the process, I was mindful that a 'one-shoe-fits-all' approach to interviews is inadvisable:

⁴⁸ For instance, 'job interview' or 'media interview'.

“The interviewer must continually make on-the-spot decisions about what to ask and how; which aspects of a subject’s answer to follow up, and which not; which answers to comment and interpret, and which not. The interviewer should have a sense for good stories and be able to assist the subjects in the unfolding of their narratives” (Kvale, 2007, p. 81).

My semi-structured interviews had two purposes: to understand the managers’ perspectives about the value of SportHelp’s youth sport programmes; and to appreciate the change and continuity of the charity. In terms of the latter, I was interested to know how SportHelp operated; how had the charity evolved? Considering these managers steer the charity’s course, they were ideally suited to provide insights into both areas.

The interview ‘agenda’ for the first purpose, understanding the managers’ perspectives about the value of SportHelp’s youth sport programmes, was predominantly grounded in a human needs framework⁴⁹. Considering SportHelp’s sport programmes constitute provision of non-formal education, and that one of the central goals of non-formal education is to meet young people’s needs (Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi, 2015; Romi and Schmida, 2009; Souto-Otero, 2016), it made sense to use the needs literature advanced in the Literature Review as the basis for my questions. However, it is not easy to discuss ‘needs’ in those terms. For instance, if someone were to ask me what my needs were, I would struggle to provide a coherent answer. I circumvented this issue by asking more relatable questions, such as ‘why do you think young people join SportHelp programmes?’

The interview schedule for my second purpose, appreciating SportHelp’s change and continuity, was shaped by a cursory look at the charity’s impact reports and my experiences as a placement student with SportHelp. Being able to draw on my experiences during the four-month placement was particularly valuable. It meant I had a sense of how the charity operated, but, instead of asking superficial questions,

⁴⁹ All interview schedules can be found in Appendix two.

I generated a more fruitful discussion (Nisbet and Watt, 1984) by following a more targeted line of questioning. As Healey (1993) notes,

“obtaining information direct from business owners and managers is a time-consuming and labour-intensive method of collecting information, and it is therefore usually sensible first to examine other sources” (p. 341).

The combination of my prior experiences and the charity impact reports constituted these ‘other sources’⁵⁰.

The five interviews lasted an hour, on average, and the longest was an hour and fifteen minutes. Though they took place in a range of spaces in SportHelp’s central offices, the interviews were both one-on-one and conducted privately. They were recorded verbatim with an audio recorder and subsequently transcribed. I transcribed the interviews myself, using a foot pedal to expedite the process. Considering there is no correct manner in transcribing an interview because it depends on how the transcript will be used (Kvale, 2007), I opted to produce a verbatim account of the conversation with my participants. However, I did not pay close attention to pauses or hesitations. My goal – as I explain at the end of this chapter, in the analysis section – was to identify latent themes (underlying ideas) within the transcripts, not to conduct detailed conversation analysis on the words and pauses used.

My participants also signed an informed consent form, which I will say more about later in the ‘Ethics’ section of this chapter. Whilst my aim was to conduct all these interviews before moving onto Phase 2 of the data collection (interviewing coaches and young people, as well as the participant observation), in practice, this did not happen. This, as I detail in the ‘what went wrong and what I learned from it’ section at the end of this chapter, did not hinder the data collection process.

⁵⁰ It was one of the central reasons why I relied on convenience sampling to select SportHelp as my case.

Data collection Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews and participant observation

Phase 2 of data collection took place after interviewing the charity's trustees and managers in Phase 1. The goal of Phase 2 was to capture data at the *actual* and *empirical levels*. At the *empirical level*, it was about exploring coaches' and young peoples' perspectives and experiences of SportHelp's youth sport programmes. At the *actual level*, I relied on observations of the coaching sessions to understand how the youth sport sessions operated. Phase 2 included two sub-questions: what are (b) coaches' and (c) young people's perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?

Data for both questions was collected concurrently since coaches and young people shared the same environment during sport sessions. To answer (b) and (c), I relied on the same methods (which are also popular case-study methods): semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The choice of these complementary methods was influenced by the work of Hirsch et al. (2011). By using interviews and observations in their research, the authors unearthed rich qualitative data about disadvantaged young people's involvement in after-school activities. Before outlining how I used semi-structured interviews and participant observation to answer the sub-questions (b) and (c), I indicate below what each question sought to answer.

b) What are the coaches' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?

My aim was to explore coaches' experiences about their role and their provision of youth sport programmes. What values do they and the charity attempt to instil in young people? How do they strive to meet adolescents' needs? How do coaches use sport as a tool to address such needs? How do coaches develop relationships with young people? These goals were similar for sub-question (c):

c) What are the young people's perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?

I wanted to understand what adolescents gained from attending SportHelp sessions; why did they attend the charity's programmes? What did young people learn from their coaches? What types of relationship did they develop?

Semi-structured interviews

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with coaches and young people for the same reason I used them with the managers: they offered a framework where I could address particular topics whilst allowing room to explore issues my participants shared (Denscombe, 2014).

For (b), I interviewed two basketball coaches and two table tennis coaches. My questions and the areas I wanted to discuss were shaped by my literature review (particularly in terms of needs and the purpose of youth sport programmes), my prior experience of observing SportHelp sessions whilst I was on placement, and content from the interviews with managers. I was interested in learning about coaching practices and how coaches developed relationships with young people, as well as what it was like to work for SportHelp, and how coaches viewed young people's needs.

On average, these four interviews lasted an hour and ten minutes, the longest lasting an hour and twenty. They were audio recorded and then transcribed in the same manner I transcribed the managers' interviews. All the interviews took place at the coaches' schools in whatever location was empty. I interviewed Karl in a dance studio, Jake in the empty cafeteria, Vincent in a meeting room, and Alfred in his office. Like the managers, the coaches signed a consent form before starting the interview.

Initially, I had set out to conduct two interviews with coaches: one at the beginning of the data collection period, and one at the end. However, as the data collection process evolved, and the nature of my research question changed, I realised the second interview was no longer necessary. The original idea was to rely on a pair of interviews as a means of exploring participants' views before and after the data collection period. However, I came to realise the second interview was unnecessary for a series of reasons.

In my first interview with the coaches, I covered more ground and in more depth than I had expected. Secondly, the rationale for the second interview was to ask for clarification and expansion about issues which emerged during the participant observations. Instead of waiting for a final interview, I simply asked the coaches informally throughout and after the sessions. This enabled me to tap into the coaches' thoughts 'in the moment', instead of having to rely on them recalling their experiences.

For sub-question (c), I interviewed six young people: four basketball players, and two table tennis players. Though the plan was to conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each person, I had to improvise a focus group with Fish and Orange due to a series of unexpected circumstances. Akin to my interview preparation with the coaches, I relied on my literature review (particularly in terms of youth sport programmes and human needs), my prior experience of SportHelp, and the data I gathered from interviews with managers and coaches. To answer sub-question (c), I focused on themes such as why these adolescents attended SportHelp programmes and what they learned from them. How did they develop a relationship with their coaches? What did they value about the programme? I had also initially planned to conduct two interviews with young people, one at the start and another at the end of my data collection period. For the same reason as I outlined above with the coaches, half-way through collecting data I decided against it.

I used semi-structured interviews with young people because this format empowers them by treating them as 'active participants' instead of passive beings (Alderson, 2005). I was cognizant that interviewing adults and interviewing young people require different skill-sets. Whilst my participants (aged 13-16) were not children, they were not adults either. To break up the interview process and yield rich data with this demographic, researchers tend to rely on child-based methods (Elton-Chalcraft, 2011). These methods aim to encourage young people to feel comfortable by helping them realise the researcher is *genuinely* interested in youths' experiences. In short, child-based methods help an adolescent appreciate that the interviewer is a listener who will not pass judgement. This skill – listening without

passing judgement – is one I acquired over five years of working in summer camps with young people, where I had to discuss a range of sensitive issues with them. Though I did not use child-based methods *per se*, I applied the *principle* of child-based methods to my semi-structured interviews. I altered the language I used, ensured I made the setting informal and relaxed, and reminded young people that they were always in control. Thus, young people showed a willingness to talk to me and all of them engaged in the interview process.

All the individual interviews lasted half an hour, whilst the impromptu focus group lasted an hour. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in the same manner as the coaches' and managers' interviews. All the interviews took place within the young people's schools, during part of their sports session. Though I had secured all the necessary consent (especially considering these participants are considered a 'vulnerable group' (more on this later in the 'Ethics' section of the chapter), I still needed to be mindful of child safeguarding. This meant I could not be alone in a room with a young person. Therefore, the focus group with Orange and Fish took place in a classroom with an open door, opposite a staffed PE office; the interviews with H. and Tia happened just outside the basketball hall, under the watchful gaze of a school camera and with Coach Karl within earshot and sight. Lastly, my interviews with Carys and Mitch were conducted in the corner of a sports hall where Jake (at one end) was delivering his session whilst another of the school's PE teachers ran a PE session.

Participant observation

Participant observations of the youth sport programmes – the sites where coaches and young people interacted – were important to complement the interviews because:

“It is one thing to read about what someone does, and another to hear that person talk about it, but nothing compares to seeing it live. Sometimes what someone actually does is

different than what the person says they do. And when you see it live you can be attentive to all of the subtle cues to which people might be responding and using in their communication” (Hirsch et al. 2011, p. 303).

The purpose of these participant observations was to capture data at the *actual level*: how the youth sport programmes operated. However, participant observation technically blurs the line between the *empirical level* and the *actual level* because the method “places researchers in the midst of whatever it is they study” (Berg 2007, p. 172). This means that my data was a combination of observations and conversations with participants. These conversations, since they are about individuals’ experiences, took place at the *empirical level* of the critical realists’ stratified view of reality. Participant observations have been called ‘naturalistic’ or ‘ethnographic’ (Simpson and Tuson, 1995), however, as Delamont (2004) clarifies, the terms ‘ethnography’, ‘participant observation’, and ‘fieldwork’ are all used interchangeably in the literature – a practice I shall subscribe to in my thesis.

Though I interviewed four coaches, I conducted observations of three sessions. I spent ten basketball sessions with Coach Vincent, ten table tennis ones with Coach Jake, and only two with Coach Karl⁵¹. Each session lasted between an hour and a half, and two hours. Vincent’s and Karl’s sessions took place after school; Jake’s happened during the school day. Also, in Jake’s sessions, my two participants would skip an academic class to have a table tennis session. This was not something I requested: most of Coach Jake’s sessions were during school hours with one or two students.

During the 7 months I did observations, I followed Werner and Schoepfle’s (1987) advice of engaging in the different activities of observing, participating in the session and having short, informal chats with participants. The extent to which I could take part in the session depended on various factors, such as the goals of the session and my ability to take part. For instance, I frequently formed part of

⁵¹ I have unpacked why I only spent 2 sessions with Coach Karl in a section title ‘what went wrong and what I learned’, towards the end of this chapter.

Vincent's session as a 'dummy defender'. This defending is non-aggressive: I simply stood in the young people's way when they dribbled or shot. Through the role of a 'participant-as-observer' (Gold, 1958), I developed relationships with the young people by playing with them. In turn, this sped up the transformation from 'outsider' to 'insider'. However, I was careful to balance my involvement in the sessions without neglecting conducting observations or striking conversations. I was aware of the pitfalls of 'going native' (Gold, 1958) and losing the focus of my research.

The focus of my observations was similar to the interviews; however, I was also interested in observing the interaction between the coaches and the young people. I focused on the types of values the coaches attempted to instil in the young people and how the youths responded to this. How did the coaches use sport as a tool to meet their young people's needs? What did the young people learn from their coaching sessions? Did the coaching sessions resemble what the charity managers and trustees hoped they would 'look like'? Participant observation enabled me to see if there were any discrepancies between what the coaches and young people said and did (Hirsch, Deutsch and Dubois, 2011). Additionally, the ethnography generated data that would have not otherwise arisen from an interview. For instance, some of the sessions did not go according to plan because the young people were either tired or unresponsive. How the coaches dealt with these scenarios was enlightening. Once again, this illustrates the importance of collecting data at the *actual* level (observations) as well as at the *empirical* level (interviews).

With regards to field notes, I took what Berg (2007) calls 'cryptic jottings': brief notes recorded on paper whilst in the field. These cryptic jottings then flourished into fuller and richer accounts ('detailed descriptions') as soon as the observed session had come to an end and I was travelling back home on the bus. As an added layer of privacy, I took the 'cryptic jottings' in my native language, Spanish. The more time I spent in the field, the less inclined I was to take notes during the sessions. From a reflexive point of view, I did not want the coaches and young people to perceive me as someone who was taking a note of

everything that happened. It's not pleasant to have a conversation with someone and soon after see that person taking notes – secretly – about the conversation. As a compromise, I jotted down key words, rather than notes, that would trigger my memory after the session.

To summarise sub-questions (b) and (c), I relied on semi-structured interviews and participant observations. By jointly using these methods, I uncovered rich qualitative data about my participants' experiences (the *empirical* level) whilst observing the youth sport programmes (the *actual* level). The interviews and participant observations addressed similar areas, namely the different actors' (coaches' and youths') perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes.

Ethics

In accordance with a critical realist position, my goal was to gather my participants' experiences and interpretations of how the neoliberal landscape shaped SportHelp and its youth sport programmes. To do this, I subscribed to an ethics of care whereby my ethical decisions were "made on the basis of care, compassion, and a desire to act in ways that benefit the individual or group that is the focus of research" (Prosser, 2011, p. 494). Adhering to an ethics of care entailed forging trusting relationships with participants, as well as behaving empathically and supportively. Sharing one's experiences is often challenging (Ennew, 1994; Spyrou, 2011), which means the level of a participants' cooperation can be drastically improved or hindered by the researcher's behaviour (Larsson and Lamb, 2009). I constantly tried to gauge my interviewees' comfort levels by 'putting myself in their shoes'. This allowed me to engage with their experiences in a way that balanced my research interests alongside not wanting to harm my participants (Barnard, 2005). By following an ethics of care, I entered the field accepting that interacting with human beings is messy and complex because people are messy and complex. Consequently, my behaviour in any given situation was dependent on

“... the context, nature of the disclosure, age of the child [or participant], relationship of the child [or participant] to the researcher... [if a problem arises] the researcher should try to discuss with the child [or participant] what strategy they would like to pursue” (Morrow 2005, p. 153, square brackets added to original text).

Overall, my study did not face complex ethical issues. The most salient element – working with adolescents and ensuring their safeguarding – ran according to plan. In this section, I address the ethics of my study by outlining a disclaimer; informed consent; privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity; empowering vulnerable participants; entering and leaving the field; and the role of the researcher in the research process.

Disclaimer

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, collecting data with SportHelp was the second time I collaborated with the charity. The first time was when I went on placement with them during the end of my first year as a PhD student. I worked for the charity on a project of their own devising, and I was paid by SportHelp. However, the project I worked on was completely different to my research. During my data collection, it was my project at the forefront, not the charity’s. I received no funding from them, and was not constrained to produce specific results for them. Upon finishing data analysis, I shared my key findings with SportHelp as a way to thank them, and also in the hopes that my research could support their mission of helping young people.

Informed consent

Informed consent is defined as ensuring participants fully understand the purpose of my research, what their role would entail, and how the information generated would be used and disseminated (BERA, 2011). Given the multiple actors in my study, I had to gain permission from various gatekeepers before any data was collected. Firstly, I approached the senior management in SportHelp to explain who I was and what the purpose of my research would be. Though the charity was slow to respond (3 months passed before I could begin), senior management granted me entry to SportHelp as long as I did not “distract coaches from their core objectives”.

With regards to interviewing the adults (managers and coaches), I devised a consent form (Appendix one) which each participant had to read in my presence before signing. I was careful to verbally stress my commitment to anonymity, confidentiality, and to remind participants they were under no obligation to respond to any of my questions. I also stressed the right to withdraw: participants could opt out of my study at any time, even after the data collection period had ended. If they chose to do so, their data would be immediately destroyed. If this were to happen, I re-assured participants they would experience no negative reaction due to withdrawing. The consent forms for coaches included an additional section about observations. There, I detailed what the observations would be like and that, crucially, they did not constitute an evaluation of the coach’s ability or style.

Gaining access to interview my six young participants required the consent (other than the charity’s) of two further gatekeepers: the coaches, and the youths’ parents. The coach’s permission came in the form of which young people were selected for interviews. As I described in the ‘sample’ section of this chapter, the coaches sometimes chose participants they thought I wanted instead of the type of youth I requested. Once the young people were identified, I sent the coaches two consent forms (found in Appendix one): one for parents, and one for young people. Though both documents contained the same

information, the one for young people was written in adolescent-friendlier language. Both the parents and young people had to sign their respective consent forms to take part in my study.

Though I met the young people after they had signed their consent forms (an unfortunate result of the data collection site being far away), I made sure to verbally check they *wanted* to participate. Though these youths were under 16 years of age, they were still competent and capable of giving consent. Not only was I following English law (as Powell and Smith, 2009, remind us via the landmark Gillick case - *Gillick v. West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Authority* 1986), it was morally important I could assess their “understanding about the project and their rights” (Alderson, 2005, p. 34) before starting. Fundamentally, I reiterated that not forming part of the research would have no consequence whatsoever on their participation in SportHelp activities.

The final consent hurdle I had to overcome entailed dealing with the young people who would be part of my observations, yet who would not be interviewed. This proved to be tricky because, other than in the table tennis session (which were private sessions, so it was always Coach Jake, Mitch, Carys, and myself), the basketball sessions featured a flow of participants. Some came some weeks, some did not. Since I had been granted access by the gatekeepers of the charity and coach to observe the sessions, I pragmatically gained youth’s *assent* instead of *consent* (Greig, Taylor and Mackay, 2007). This compromise entailed introducing myself to the basketball groups, explaining who I was and why I was at the sessions. I explained that I was interested in chatting to them when the chance arose, but that they were under no obligation to talk to me. I also underlined they could approach me at any time for a reminder as to why I was there.

I faced no problems of any kind with regards to consent. Since I had developed a relationship with SportHelp during my placement, the charity managers and administrators were more inclined to give me their time. Similarly, so were the coaches. In turn, since the coaches were comfortable with my presence, the young people quickly became so.

Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity

I took several measures to ensure all my participants' privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. All names (including the charity's) have been given pseudonyms (which only I can connect back to each person's real name). Though I asked my participants whether they wanted me to use a pseudonym of their choice, most of them (except a few of the young people) were happy for me to pick one for them. Anonymity extends beyond pseudonyms (Bryman, 2016), which is why I made sure to strike a balance between sharing as much primary information as possible throughout this thesis without running the risk of readers identifying who the charity or any of my participants are. For instance, SportHelp developed a new framework which underpins their youth sport programmes. In addition to giving it a pseudonym – 'Sport For Good', as I mention in the Results and Discussion chapters – I have been careful to not disclose the entire framework.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, all data (my observation notes and interview transcripts) were password protected when digitally stored. Hard copies of documents were kept behind a locked key in my office. I reminded participants they could access their interview transcripts at any time (though no-one took me up on the offer!). Lastly, though my participants were aware of the steps I took to protect their privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, I had to clarify the child protection caveat to my six adolescent interviewees. I explained to them⁵² that the contents of the interview were confidential and that I would not speak about it to their coaches or parents, or anyone else in the school, *unless* they revealed a child protection issue. In that case, I explained to them I would have to share the matter with a child protection officer. Since I was conducting research through SportHelp, rather than the school itself, SportHelp gave me the contact details for the charity's Child Protection Officer. There were no disclosures of any kind, nor any that came close.

⁵² Using language and vernacular they understood.

Empowering vulnerable participants

Since my six young participants were aged 13-16, they fell under the bracket of ‘vulnerable members of society’. This vulnerability is not rooted in an archaic view that children are objects in need of protection (Morrow, 2005). Rather, it is about acknowledging that children are dependent on the adults around them, and so lack financial and political power (Landsdown, 1994). In short, this ‘vulnerability’ emerged from a power imbalance between me (the adult researcher) and the adolescents (the participants). An attentiveness to this disparity was crucial for three reasons.

Firstly, awareness of the power imbalance enhanced my self-reflexivity. I made sure to never abuse my position of ‘power’ by treating young people as active participants in the research (Christensen and Prout, 2002). This entailed conducting interviews in familiar environments (Einarsdóttir, 2007) such as the sports hall or a room near it, as well as being careful to never judge any of what they young people said. In various occasions, my participants said things I disagreed with. I never let this show – I just asked questions which helped me understand their experiences and interpretations. As soon as they realised I did not judge them (it usually took about 5-10 minutes), they visibly relaxed and opened up.

The second reason attentiveness to the power disparity was important was in relation to an issue I raised a few paragraphs ago: child protection. Though none of my interview questions were expected to be of a sensitive nature, I had to be prepared to deal with any child protection disclosure. As previously mentioned, I explained to my participants (before the interview began) how any disclosure would nullify the confidentiality and anonymity promised in the consent form (France, Bendelow and Williams, 2000). I also informed the adolescents that I would have to report the disclosure to SportHelp’s Child Protection Officer. In hindsight, I could have done more than warn my participants what would happen if they disclosed any information; I could have devoted a minute or two to explain why the disclosure process operates how it does. This is a lesson I have learned for future interviews.

The third way an awareness of the power imbalance was instrumental for my study was it helped me protect myself as a researcher. Since I was dealing with underage participants, I obtained clearance from the police (Alderson, 2005) in the form of a DBS certificate. I also took steps to ensure I was never alone in a room with a participant. This required making the best out of each situation. As I described earlier in the chapter, when I interviewed Orange and Fish, we held an impromptu focus group in a classroom (where we left the door open) opposite a staffed PE office. Carys and Mitch were individually interviewed in the corner of the sports hall, as far away from people playing sport as possible. I recorded my conversations individually with H. and Tia outside the basketball hall, in a corner of the corridor where we could still be seen by school cameras whilst being in ear shot of Coach Karl.

Entering and leaving the field

There were two ‘fields’ I entered and exited during data collection. The first was the charity itself, and the second was each of the three coaching sessions I observed. Once SportHelp allowed me to begin collecting data, I outlined how I hoped to proceed to Dane, my contact point within the charity. I kept Dane regularly updated about my movements and developments through brief e-mails summarising what I had been doing (such as how many observations I had conducted) and assuring him that all was well. Dane, of his own volition, came with me on my first visit to each of the three coaches whose sessions I ended up observing. He did this to ensure I was supported, and to clarify to the coaches that the charity had no stake in my research. I formally concluded data collection and exited the field after having a face to face debrief with Dane. We met for an hour, where we both reflected on the data collection process and I shared with him some preliminary findings (prior to analysis). When I completed my analysis, I followed up on those preliminary findings by sending him a brief report with my conclusions and recommendations.

The other 'fields' I entered and exited were the three coaching sessions I observed. As an outsider entering another community, I had to ensure I could 'blend' into the sessions (Crang and Cook, 2007). Upon entering the field, I reminded coaches that they were doing me a favour, and that under no circumstance did I want them to behave or act in a different way just because I was there. I also made a point of introducing myself to all the young people at the sessions by clearly outlining who I was. In these coaching sessions, I exercised reflexivity and considered how my presence affected my surroundings. To minimise the chances of over-stepping my boundaries, or disrupting sessions, I constantly spoke with the coaches and checked with them whether I was in their way. Doing all these things from the outset made entering all three coaching sessions straightforward and problem free.

I exited the coaching sessions in the same way I exited the charity: by having a debrief conversation with the coaches and saying good-bye (and thank you!) to the young people. Unfortunately, I was not able to debrief the young people (they always had to leave just after the session). Additionally, because of unplanned circumstances, I was also unable to debrief Coach Vincent or say good-bye to Orange and Fish.

The role of the researcher in the research process

It is important to acknowledge my role as a researcher in the production of this thesis considering

"All research is influenced to some extent by the values of the researcher. Only through those values do certain problems get identified and studied in particular ways" (Silverman, 2013, p. 403).

It is through my background and political views that I approached this project and the neoliberal landscape in a critical manner. Furthermore, my interest in charities as providers of non-formal education flourished after my four-month placement with SportHelp, where my conceptions of how a charity operated were challenged. I began to appreciate the extent to which neoliberal governmentality seemed

to shape SportHelp. Through this placement, I developed a deeper interest in understanding how neoliberal governmentality influenced the charity's growth. Using a combination of my experiences from my placement, and data from this thesis, I published an autoethnography (Costas Batlle, Carr and Brown, 2017) which captured how my beliefs and preconceptions about what a charity was, and how it operated, were forcefully contested. As a result of this process, I developed a stronger critical stance on neoliberalism. In turn, this 'value' (to use Silverman's, 2013, term in the above quote) shaped the lens through which I studied the current problem: how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?

An awareness of my role in the research process, and that the knowledge I generated during my project is not value free, constitutes 'reflexivity' (Bryman, 2016). Reflexivity was an inextricable part of my research from the start. I have addressed this essential aspect of social science research (Delamont, 2002) throughout this chapter without formally discussing it by embedding reflexivity in different sections. This demonstrates how I constantly underwent a process of monitoring and review throughout my research (Jones, 2004). In accordance with a critical realist world view, being reflexive helped cement how I went about 'capturing' my participants experiences and interpretations of how SportHelp operated.

Related to reflexivity is what Pattman and Kehily (2004) term 'self-reflexivity': "a style whereby the interviewer reflects upon the ways in which identities are produced and negotiated within the context of the research process" (p.131). Self-reflexivity, according to the authors, focuses on how an individual's characteristics (like gender) can impact the research process. This is a particularly noteworthy issue considering I was interviewing adolescents ('vulnerable' participants). Though I did not disguise who I was in front of my participants, self-reflexivity helped me be *aware* of who I was. For instance, I was frequently perceived as intellectually powerful because I was doing a PhD. I often countered this perception by ensuring my opinions or views never came across as superior to anybody else's. During the participant observations, I had to be self-reflexive about my clothing. I was dressed in casual clothing (t-shirt and

shorts) when I attended my first coaching session. After realising the extent to which my clothes gave away I was an outsider (like when one can spot a tourist just from their attire), I began wearing sports clothes.

Overall, a combination of self-reflexivity, being non-judgemental, and subscribing to an ethics of care helped my participants be comfortable around me. To achieve these three elements entailed sharpening one of the most important tools in a researcher's kit: awareness.

What went wrong and what I learned from it

My data collection phase was messy: by working with different groups of people, with different timetables and workloads, I expected a few things to go wrong. In fact, a substantial amount did not go according to plan. The first set-back was a 3-month delay in the start of data collection. This had a knock-on effect: once I had been given clearance by SportHelp to begin, the young people were unavailable because it was the summer exam season. Given the summer holidays follow on from these exams, and that SportHelp's programmes are tied to the school calendar, I had no choice but to wait until September before I began observing coaching sessions. In the meantime, I tried to interview as many coaches and charity managers as possible.

Once I started my observations of the coaching sessions in September, a new set of curve balls came my way. Since Coach Karl was slow to respond to my e-mails⁵³, I only attended a couple of his sessions towards the end of data collection. Additionally, before my study concluded, Tia, one of the two young people I interviewed from Karl's session, left the school due to a serious child protection issue. Consequently, I was only able to observe one of my two interviewees (H.) in Coach Karl's sessions on two occasions.

⁵³ This is not an attack on Coach Karl, it is symptomatic of the volume of work he had to wade through.

Whilst I attended Coach Vincent's basketball sessions regularly, I faced two different problems. The first happened on my first visit: Orange and Fish, the young people I would be interviewing, were injured. Vincent found me a room, put me in it with the two youths, and I was forced to carry out an impromptu focus group. Though I was apprehensive about carrying out a focus group I had not planned, it turned out to be one of the richest interviews I conducted given how well Orange and Fish played off each other. Unfortunately, their injuries persisted throughout the whole of my data collection period. Fish regularly came to training, but could not play. Orange did not show up until the very last session I attended. Like in Coach Karl's case, I was unable to regularly see my two interviewees in action.

The start of my observations with Coach Jake was also delayed by a problem that almost seriously thwarted my research: Jake, after almost 10 years with the charity, considered quitting. Eventually, he decided to stay with SportHelp, and data collection began. Since the sessions were always for the same two players (Mitch and Carys), they regularly attended. There was a two-week stint where Mitch had been banned from table tennis for committing a school infraction, but he was allowed to return.

My research design changed along the way: as I previously discussed, my initial plan was to interview the coaches and young people twice – I decided against this half way through data collection. Furthermore, I realised the insights of a fourth coach (Alfred), a lower-level manager (Lisa), and a fundraiser (Emily) could significantly contribute to my thesis. I interviewed them *after* the participant observations. The initial fourth coach I was going to interview stopped returning my e-mails, so I had to look for another one – Alfred. This was also a blessing in disguise; Alfred provided a thoughtful and rich interview.

So, what did I learn? Two things. The first, which I mentioned in the 'The role of the researcher in the research process' sub-section, was I honed my 'awareness'. When things went wrong, it was easy to slip into the "automatic, unconscious belief that I am the centre of the world and that my immediate needs and feelings are what should determine the world's priorities" (Wallace, 2009, p. 83). Awareness,

for David Foster Wallace, entails breaking away from the ‘default setting’ mentality just quoted. It involves “attention ... and discipline, and effort, and being able truly to care about other people” (p. 120). I learned how to distance myself from my ‘default setting’ by remembering that, as a researcher, I was an add-on to the already busy lives of my participants.

Secondly, I learned that having a plan is good, but that one should not hold on too tightly to that plan. Too many unexpected, rich conversations and situations happened during data collection to recount in this chapter. In those moments, dropping the plan and ‘going with the flow’ – as colloquial and clichéd as it sounds – resulted in unearthing insightful and valuable ‘bricks’ for my thesis.

Analysing the results: Thematic analysis

I analysed my data using an approach which aligns with a critical realist ontology and epistemology: thematic analysis (Bonnington and Rose, 2014; Fletcher, 2017). In keeping with the theory-driven tradition of critical realism, I used ‘theoretical’ thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This entailed using theory from my literature review as the starting point through which to search for specific themes. Consequently, my goal was to focus on particular in-depth themes instead of providing a superficial account of my whole data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). By using a theory driven approach which focused on examining in-depth themes, I aimed to identify latent themes:

“examining underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations ... that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

Exploring latent themes is an important component of critical realist analysis (Bonnington and Rose, 2014) because unearthing and theorising these underlying ideas is how causal mechanisms (like

neoliberal governmentality) can be understood to shape the data collected at the empirical and actual levels⁵⁴.

From start to end, my data underwent ten iterations before the 11 latent themes which spoke to my research question emerged⁵⁵. To guide me through this iterative process, I adhered to Braun and Clarke's (2006, p. 87) six phases of thematic analysis. I began with the interview material. After familiarising myself with my data (step 1) by transcribing, reading, and re-reading the transcripts, I began generating initial codes (step 2). Using a combination of codes generated from my literature review (from theory) and codes which emerged from the data, I created a master document with all my codes and interview excerpts. Within this file, under each code, I pasted the corresponding text copied from a participant's transcript. I was careful to include the context around the excerpt I was interested in – not doing so is a common criticism of qualitative analysis⁵⁶ (Bryman, 2016).

This master document underwent two iterations before being split into three files. The first two iterations focused on identifying text within my transcripts that matched existing codes I had generated from theory, or categorising text under new codes generated from the data. For the third iteration, I split the master file into three files: one containing the managers' codes and corresponding text, one containing the coaches', and one containing the young people's. This approach was shaped by aiming to answer my three sub-questions (what are the managers'/coaches/young people's perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?), which, in turn, would allow me to make sense of my research question: how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes? Iteration four consisted in further 'cleaning' and collating my codes.

⁵⁴ In my case, interviews with managers, coaches, and young people captured data at the *empirical* level, whilst participant observations of SportHelp youth sport programmes captured data at the *actual* level.

⁵⁵ See Appendix Four for a diagrammatic representation of my data analysis.

⁵⁶ Because it means the researcher can 'cherry pick' and de-contextualise a participant's words.

Iteration five aligned with phase 3 of Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide to thematic analysis: searching for themes. Within each of the three files, I began considering how codes and their corresponding text could be combined into broader, overarching themes. Using the three Word documents the codes were already on, I created themes and pasted selected codes under these themes. From iteration five, I emerged with a list of thirty-six themes; 14 for the managers, and 11-a-piece for the coaches and young people. I then began refining themes (step 4) within each of the three documents with the aim of ensuring they "capture the contours of the coded data" *and* that they "'accurately' reflect[s] the meanings evident in the data set as a whole" (p. 91). Iteration six and seven were dedicated to refining themes by ensuring the themes captured the essence of the codes within them (without stretching the theme too far) whilst also addressing my three sub-questions. By this point, I had more precise titles for my themes, and had reduced them from thirty-six to seventeen.

Iteration eight and nine entailed complementing the seventeen interview-related themes with my data from the participant observations. To do this, I created a fourth document with the seventeen themes I had found from the interviews, but without the corresponding text. Using these themes as a lens, I scanned through my observation notes and categorised them according to the existing themes. I took this approach for two reasons: firstly, thematic analysis lends itself to analysing observation notes (Crang and Cook, 2007), and secondly, I kept in line with my critical realist research design. The participant observations were designed to capture data at the *actual* level of reality which could complement and expand on the *empirical* level demarked by my participants' perspectives of SportHelp's youth sport programmes. Therefore, the aspects of my observations I was particularly interested in were those relating to issues identified in the interviews. Working through iterations eight and nine helped me refine and define my themes.

Subsequently, with iteration ten I moved onto phase 5: defining and naming themes. I grouped together the themes and quotes from the three interview documents, and the observations document,

into a single master document. It is here where I settled on a total of 11 themes, and was prepared to embark on Braun and Clarke's final phase: producing the report. I address these themes in the next chapter of my thesis.

Chapter summary

This chapter laid out the steps I took to answer my research question:

How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sports programmes?

Adopting a critical realist philosophical stance, I conducted a qualitative case study of the UK charity SportHelp. To capture qualitative data, I employed a combination of two methods: semi-structured interviews and participant observation. These methods were applied during data collection in two phases. The first phase entailed interviewing five managers to learn about the charity's operation and culture, as well as managers' perspectives about the charity's youth sport programmes. Phase 2 entailed interviews with four coaches and six young people, as well as participant observations of the three of these coaches' sessions. Given my research involved human beings (and some of those were 'vulnerable' youths), I took a careful ethical approach. Despite the numerous set-backs I faced, data collection was a success. Having outlined how I analysed my data, in the next chapter I address my findings.

Results

Introduction

Attending to Sandelowski's (1998, p. 376) recommendations for qualitative researchers to “not only choose what story they will tell, but how they will tell it”, I have organised the presentation of my data with respect to my research question and the three sub-questions I outlined in the previous chapter. As I have already explained, the three sub-questions do not constitute ‘research questions’; their purpose was to help me collect and organise my data, in turn helping me answer my research question:

How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?

The three sub-questions are:

- a) What are the managers’ perspectives about the value of SportHelp’s youth sport programmes?**
- b) What are the coaches’ perspectives about the value of SportHelp’s youth sport programmes?**
- c) What are the young people’s perspectives about the value of SportHelp’s youth sport programmes?**

Whilst the whole of the chapter is designed to address my research question, I have presented my findings in two parts. The first part addresses the first half of my research question (‘How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp?’) by focusing on the charity’s change and continuity at the macro-level. The second part of the chapter deals with the second half of my research question: ‘how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp’s youth sport programmes?’ Here, I examine the charity’s programmes through the lenses of three actors at micro-level: managers, coaches, and young people. As I advanced in Methodology chapter, my data was distilled through an analytical approach which aligns

with a critical realist ontology and epistemology: thematic analysis (Bonnington and Rose, 2014; Fletcher, 2017). After collecting data at the *empirical* (interviews) and *actual* (observations) levels of reality (Fletcher, 2017), I identified a total of 11 latent themes. In the table below (**Figure 4**), I have summarised the contents of this paragraph to demonstrate how this chapter is organised.

Research question: How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?	
Part one: First half of the research question. Macro-level view of SportHelp: the charity. Data collected at the <i>empirical</i> level.	Themes
How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp?	New Public Management Responsibilisation
Part two: Second half of the research question. Micro-level view of SportHelp: the YSPs Data collected at the <i>empirical</i> and <i>actual</i> levels.	Themes
What are the managers' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?	Managers as sport evangelists Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality Coaches as 'transformative leaders'
What are the coaches' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?	Coaches as sport evangelists Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality Caring for young people
What are the young people's perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?	Young people as sport evangelists Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality Passion, caring coaches, and a sense of belonging

Figure 4. Organisation of the results chapter.

I have presented my data in the spirit of what Braun, Maguire and Ball (2010) refer to as ‘policy enactment’. By focusing on data at the macro-level and the micro-level, I illustrate how the influence of neoliberalism on SportHelp and its youth sport programmes can be understood by “examining connections and inter-dependencies” (Braun, Maguire and Ball, p. 558). These ‘inter-dependencies’ refer to the connections between neoliberal governmentality, the charity, and managers, coaches, and young people within the charity. By drawing on these ‘connections’, this chapter looks at how neoliberal governmentality operates at a policy level (re-shaping the change and continuity of SportHelp) as well as how this neoliberal discourse is interpreted at the micro-level by managers, coaches, and young people. Given the centrality of neoliberal governmentality in my findings, I identified it as the *causal mechanism* operating at the *real level* of critical realist’s stratified view of reality (Fletcher, 2017). Said differently, the causal mechanism of neoliberal governmentality is what *caused* the events (SportHelp’s change and continuity, and the development of their youth sport programmes) that my research ‘captured’ at the *empirical level* (using interviews) and *actual level* (using participant observations)⁵⁷. Thus, the overarching narrative of my findings is to illustrate the different ways in which neoliberal governmentality influenced SportHelp and its youth sport programmes.

To give an overview of my findings, neoliberal governmentality influenced SportHelp’s change and continuity according to the technologies of New Public Management and responsabilisation. By re-configuring the charity into a ‘quasi-market’, SportHelp adopted a ‘deficit-reduction’ approach toward supporting socio-economically disadvantaged young people. Sport was assumed to be an inherently suitable vehicle to improve young people’s lives, whereby ‘improvement’ meant addressing young people’s ‘deficits’ by promoting values of individual responsibility, life skills, and discipline. Said

⁵⁷ The empirical level refers to people’s interpretations of the real world, which I accessed through semi-structured interviews. The actual level refers to structures that shape individual’s interpretations at the empirical level. These structures are often ‘hidden’ or ‘invisible’. That’s why I conducted participant observations: to ‘see’ if there were aspects of the real world influencing my participants’ interpretations; aspects they were not aware of.

differently, sport was used as a technology of neoliberal governmentality to re-shape socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents into neoliberal citizens. The role of sports coaches, as 'transformative leaders', was to harness the technology of sport to re-sculpt young people's personhood.

Coaches' success in re-shaping young people into individually responsible and disciplined citizens can be explained by SportHelp operating within the realm of non-formal education. Given the emphasis on relationships, informality, and reduced hierarchies (Romi and Schmida, 2009), coaches were in a position to meet a range of young people's needs. This resulted in young people developing a passion for their sport, forging caring relationships with coaches, and feeling a sense of belonging. Because of the constraints of formal education, young people generally did not develop passion, relationships, or a sense of belonging in their classrooms. Thus, whilst adolescents were reticent to learn from their teachers, they were *willing* to internalise their coaches' teachings. This is how they embraced personal responsibility, discipline, and life skills as markers of their personhood. The conditions of non-formal education proved to be a fertile ground to internalise the tenets of neoliberal self-governance.

Before moving onto Part one of the chapter, I have presented four tables which summarise all my themes. The lay-out of the tables also provides a template of the order in which I will address each theme throughout the chapter. Though there are 11 themes, the majority of them in Part two overlap, particularly with regards to sport evangelism and sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality. However, keeping the managers', coaches', and young people's perspectives separate was important to illustrate the extent to which these three actors' views aligned.

Summary of themes

Part one:

How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp?

Theme	Description of theme
New Public Management	The neoliberal technology of New Public management shaped SportHelp's change and continuity by promoting 'professionalisation', internalising the language of corporate businesses, fostering competition, and encouraging the practices of monitoring, reporting, and measurement.
Responsibilisation	SportHelp was sculpted by the neoliberal technology of responsibilisation. This manifested via an emphasis on individual responsibility, partly characterised by the charity complying with safeguarding procedures and training coaches in these procedures.

Figure 5. Summary of themes for 'how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp?'

Part two:

What are the managers' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?

Theme	Description of theme
Managers as sport evangelists	Sport was uncritically venerated as a panacea ideally suited to help disadvantaged young people develop. Consequently, sport was assumed to be a 'force for good' which was inextricably wedded to the charity's existence and operation.
Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality	Sport was seen as a technology of neoliberal governmentality which could 'fix' the assumed 'deficits' in disadvantaged young people's lives. Using sport, young people could be reshaped into 'good citizens' who made personally responsible choices and embraced the development of specific life skills.
Coaches as 'transformative leaders'	Coaches were viewed as 'transformative leaders' whose mission was to transform ('improve') young people's personhood and lives through sport. Despite acknowledging coaches needed support and training, managers' sport evangelist beliefs led them to assume coaches' expertise in sport inherently made them 'transformative leaders'.

Figure 6. Summary of themes for 'what are the managers' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?'

What are the coaches' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?

Theme	Description of theme
Coaches as sport evangelists	Like the managers, coaches espoused uncritical beliefs about the inherent power of sport as a 'force for good'. As such, they saw themselves as 'transformative leaders' and 'bricoleurs' who used sport to teach life skills. However, during their sessions they mostly focused on sport skills and (at times) modelled maladaptive behaviours at odds with notions of 'positive development'.
Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality	Again, like the managers, coaches used sport to shape young people's personhood. They emphasised individual responsibility and discipline as the hallmarks of a 'good citizen'.
Caring for young people	Coaches demonstrated a range of caring behaviours towards young people, and used unstructured spaces like lunch times to develop relationships. Though they aimed (and generally succeeded) at creating a sense of belonging in the adolescents, caring atmospheres were put under tension during drills or matches that emphasised competition and performance.

Figure 7. Summary of themes for 'what are the coaches' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?'

What are the young people's perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?

Theme	Description of theme
Young people as sport evangelists	In line with the managers and coaches, young people uncritically believed in the innate power of 'sport for good'. They credited sport with the development of life skills, and assumed these life skills were immediately applicable to other domains in their lives.
Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality	Echoing the findings for managers' and coaches', sport served as a technology of neoliberal governmentality which re-sculpted adolescents' notions of personhood via an emphasis on individual responsibility and discipline. Young people understood internalising those traits to indicate being a 'good person'.
Passion, caring coaches, and a sense of belonging	By showing passion for their sport, viewing coaches as nurturing figures who cared for them, and feeling a sense of belonging in their sports sessions, young people illustrated how a range of their needs were met. However, the extent to which these needs were met by the coaches was contingent on the extent to which adolescents' internalised the values of individual responsibility and discipline.

Figure 8. Summary for 'what are the young people's perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?'

Part one: How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp?

Part one of this chapter addresses the first half of my research question – how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp? – by examining the change and continuity of SportHelp at the macro-level. Drawing on data gathered through interviews predominantly with SportHelp’s managers, two themes emerged which illustrate how the causal mechanism of neoliberal governmentality re-shaped SportHelp’s change and continuity: New Public Management and responsibilisation. The technology of New Public Management (NPM) re-configured the charity by emphasising market-based monitoring and reporting practices, as well as ‘professionalisation’. By heightening the charity’s awareness to demonstrate accountability, NPM operated in synchrony with the second theme, the technology of responsibilisation. This entailed instilling an ethos of personal responsibility as well as constantly updating safeguarding policies and procedures as a further demonstration of accountability. In combination, NPM and responsibilisation illustrate *how* neoliberal governmentality re-shaped SportHelp into a ‘quasi-market’⁵⁸.

New Public Management

New Public Management (NPM) refers to the rise of target setting, management and efficiency practices which have permeated the charity sector since the 1980s (Bevir, Rhodes and Weller, 2003). In SportHelp’s case, NPM manifested through re-sculpting the charity’s monitoring and reporting practices (emphasising quantification for survival in a competitive landscape), and ‘professionalisation’. In addressing these two areas, I indicate how NPM – as a technology of neoliberal governmentality – re-sculpted SportHelp into a ‘quasi-market’.

⁵⁸ ‘Quasi-markets’ refer to public sector services which do not belong to the state and who compete for services. However, they differ from private sector ‘markets’ in that they are neither privately owned, nor do they aim to maximise profits (Le Grand, 1991).

Monitoring and reporting

To compete for funds in the neoliberal marketplace, it is imperative for a charity to evidence their outcomes. What constitutes 'good' outcomes and 'good' evidence are dictated by 'economic rationalities'. SportHelp were aware they had to highlight the benefits their youth sport programmes if the charity wanted to survive:

"The balance of power between us and the funder is very much in their favour, to the point that you are not necessarily jumping through hoops, but we certainly know where to jump and when to jump. It is, probably, not an issue which is solely ours, I think it is shared by many people within the third sector whereby through, a lot of charities I think are represented by their marketing or communications expertise, rather than their ability to do the job they say they are doing. It feels like sometimes, as someone involved in evaluation, that I have to put a hell of a lot of trust in our marketing and comms people to understand the message, and to represent the message in the very best way..." (Dane).

"There are some charities who do stuff, but because of the imbalance of power, because of the increased accountability, but... they suffer because they don't have a brilliant markcomms [marketing and communications team]. They maybe do great stuff, but it doesn't go outwards, and the message doesn't go outwards. If the message doesn't go outwards, then they don't generate enough funds, if they can't generate enough funds, they can't improve their programs to meet their stakeholders, if they can't do that, they can't evidence outcomes, and they cease to be, and you go in a loop." (Dane).

Beatrice succinctly echoed Dane's reflections by underscoring how critical impact (evidencing outcomes through monitoring and reporting) is for SportHelp:

“If we can demonstrate the impact, and have a really clear message about what we do, and how we impact young lives, then we think that should help get more money from the private sector.”
(Beatrice).

“As I keep saying, the whole point of SFG⁵⁹ is to demonstrate that what we do has positive impact, so we can raise more money. That’s really the end game.” (Beatrice).

These quotes illustrate how neoliberal governmentality governs ‘at a distance’. SportHelp understood that having outcomes they could evidence was the charity’s means to present their credentials to the free market; to ‘demonstrate’ to funders that SportHelp is a ‘good’ charity doing ‘good’ work. Said differently, SportHelp realised they needed to re-configure themselves into a ‘quasi-market’ which could survive within the neoliberal landscape. This transformation entailed the adoption of New Public Management practices by embarking on a four-year organisation shift. The result of this process was the creation of a new framework which could evidence the charity’s outcomes *and* lend itself to monitoring and reporting through measurement. Thus, ‘Sport For Good’ (SFG) was born. Dane outlined how the seeds of change for this organisational shift were planted:

“It was with [a major consulting firm], who wanted to feel good about themselves and thus do some consultancy for third sector organisations, and we were on the list of people that they wanted to consult with. They were, as you can imagine, quite hot on measurables, being involved in finance and strategy and stuff like that, as they are. They kind of heightened our awareness of OK, we pay by results and you need to start generating your own results, and own your results. That started the ball rolling.” (Dane).

⁵⁹ SportHelp’s bespoke framework, ‘Sport For Good’, outlined in the next paragraph.

The emphasis on charities to 'calculate' their outputs is one of the hallmarks of neoliberal governmentality (Larner and Butler, 2005). By valuing items which are 'measurable', neoliberal governmentality encourages charities to equate the quality of their programmes to how quantifiable they are. The influence of this 'economic rationality' is further evidenced by Dane's comment "you need to start generating your own results". Part of the transformation into a 'quasi-market' is what Morison (2000) calls 'responsibilised autonomy': the pursuit of a charity's interests within the confines of 'economic rationalities'. Through developing SFG, SportHelp demonstrated entrepreneurial spirit and accountability by designing a bespoke approach tailored to the charity's goals; they no longer had to 'shoe-horn' their aims into existing 'off-the-shelf' frameworks:

"Initially, we would borrow other people's outcomes frameworks, so we borrowed frameworks from New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), we borrowed from the Young Foundation, who kind of exist in the young people's development space, lots of different places. What we were finding again and again and again is we were trying to shoehorn our own outcomes, philosophy and business strategy into other people's frameworks, and, after a while, it stopped making a great deal of sense. We had a big sit down, and we came to a point where we decided that we needed a clear business strategy, so from the top down, and part of the business strategy was creating a clear, communicable philosophy for delivery, what we do and how we do it. People call it a theory of change, or a logic model, and in order for us to build and to grow, that needed to be done sooner rather than later." (Dane).

By conforming to a New Public Management approach towards monitoring and reporting, SFG (which entails 'fuzzy' life skills in the domains of social, thinking, emotional, and physical attributes) suddenly became more tangible and 'provable':

“Um, and you’re right, it’s very, very fuzzy to use a word like “life skills”, it’s a bit like SFG, it’s very fuzzy. But you can say, I know I’ve had young people on my programme, where I first met them, they were maybe at a level 2 in terms of their communication, they didn’t know how to communicate, and over the years, in terms of how we teach them, and what they’ve learnt in terms of consequences from being on the programme, now they are at level 6!” (Lisa).

“The issue now is that, you know, academic achievement... school attendance, and behaviour. We lose academic achievement, we’re going to change behaviour, and I don’t want us to lose attendance, because if we have some hard statistic, alongside SFG, then we’ve got two different types of measurement. If we only had SFG, I would be concerned, because that is a little bit more ephemeral, because of all the self-assessment, so we just need something really hard as well as soft.” (Emily).

“... we are not powerful enough to generate new concepts within society and social walks of life. These are age old concepts, we’ve just given them a SportHelp name, they are not dissimilar to anything that you’ve already been doing. Don’t change the way you deliver as a coach, all we are doing is putting a number or a unit of measurement on your delivery, be it an hour, be it a score out of 10, be it a % increase. All we are doing is putting a number, or a percentage, on what you are doing.” (Dane).

Dane’s final sentence (“all we are doing is putting a number, or a percentage, on what you are doing”) captures how neoliberalism re-configures public services into ‘quasi-markets’ which align with the market’s economic paradigm (Harvey, 2005). Everything needs quantification, even aspects which do not naturally lend themselves to quantification, such as social, thinking, or emotional skills. However, this quantification strengthens SportHelp’s ‘credibility’ as a ‘quasi-market’; in turn consolidating its chances of securing contracts or grants when competing for funds with other organisations.

Whilst ‘quantifying the unquantifiable’ is one of the hallmarks of neoliberalism, quantifying the work charities do is a practice which predates the neoliberal epoch (Barman, 2007). Therefore, the technology of New Public Management did not just re-shape *how* SportHelp evidenced outcomes (through measurement), but *what* outcomes the charity felt were valuable. Why did SFG focus on life skills like teamwork, leadership, and communication, and not others, such as empathy or critical thinking? There was a need to generate a collection of outcomes funders could readily understand. Considering neoliberal societies emphasise ‘social values’ (Rudd, 2005) such as ‘teamwork’ and ‘self-sacrifice’ instead of moral values (fairness or honesty), SFG gathered an assortment of life skills considered valuable in neoliberal society:

“Then there’s corporate funders as well, and they... a load of corporates have a kind of foundation wing, a CSR budget, Corporate Social Responsibility budget. And often it is connected a bit to what that corporate does, and a lot of corporate funding is connected to employability and skills training.” (Emily).

Given the intensification for funds and competition in the charity sector as a consequence of the neoliberal landscape (Davies, 2011), Emily’s quote captures how SportHelp needed to find ways to align their programmes with the outcomes donors want to fund. By becoming a ‘quasi-market’ through conforming to NPM and neoliberal approaches to monitoring and reporting, the charity maximised its chances of survival:

“Obviously, you’ve seen that work that we’re doing on evaluation. We are very far ahead of what equivalent organisations are doing. It’s not about singing our own praises [...] But when you talk to funders, the feedback to us is that they are very impressed about what we are doing.” (Natalie).

"I think it is our way of demonstrating to schools what we are doing for them, and, of course, there are increasing pressures to compete for funding, and so, it is very important that we can demonstrate to a school, when they have to make cuts in their budget, that we are not something they should cut, they should keep us and continue to work with us." (Natalie).

Therefore, neoliberal governmentality influenced the change and continuity of SportHelp by shaping the contents of SFG and encouraging the prioritisation of certain life skills over others. Whilst 'teamwork' is no more inherently quantifiable than 'empathy', 'teamwork' does align with what funders expect as outcomes and outputs. As Emily suggested, "a lot of corporate funding is connected to employability and skills training". Therefore, SFG appeals to neoliberal funders because it highlights a correlation between making personally responsible choices and improved outcomes (Kumar, 2012). Youths who scored higher in life skills that funders valued (like teamwork) 'demonstrated' they were becoming 'better' people.

Whilst the neoliberal technology of NPM re-shaped SportHelp's change and continuity into a 'quasi-market' by exerting "power at a distance by normalising particular preferred approaches or procedures within the voluntary sector" (Buckingham, 2009, p. 245), SportHelp staff demonstrated an awareness of the pitfalls of measurement:

"I understand what you mean. But, again, at least it's something. At least we have something and we can measure something [referring to teamwork] that we all know and accept is not accurate. But... that's the only way we can try to do that. We are trying to measure something that is not measurable." (Alfred).

"I look at what we do, and in the pursuit of representation, I am never happy. There will always be gaps in our ability to capture it, and thus in our ability to understand. It sounds, sort of tantamount to perfectionism, but I want to represent the work that coaches do on a day to day basis, and,

equally, the improvement that the young people show. To capture that is nigh on impossible, but I'm going to have a bloody good go at doing it. That's where the pressure, I guess, comes from." (Dane).

Despite Alfred's consideration that "we can measure something that we all know and accept is not accurate" demonstrating critical awareness, it also shows how the pervasiveness of 'economic rationalities' has re-shaped intangible concepts such as teamwork into *inherently measurable* items. Measurement is seen as a better default than not measuring – even when a concept is admittedly unquantifiable. This is how neoliberal governmentality consolidates itself as a 'regime of truth' (Read, 2009): it is the default. Having illustrated how NPM re-sculpted SportHelp into a 'quasi-market' by developing the 'Sport For Good' framework as a new means of monitoring and reporting the charity's practices, I will now address the second way in which NPM influenced SportHelp: professionalisation.

'Professionalisation'

'Professionalisation' entails bureaucratic divisions of labour (such as managers and front-line service providers – coaches) and the use of practices attuned to businesses (Fyfe, Timbrell and Smith, 2006). As a component of New Public Management (Laurie and Bondi, 2005), professionalisation was identified by Natalie as one of the key ways SportHelp transformed into a 'quasi-market':

"As the charity grows, you become more professional. I think, initially, it was more seat-of-the-pants, it was quite opportunistic." (Natalie).

"I think we wanted to become more professional in how we operated our coaching programs, I think we also wanted to help the coaches have a much better infrastructure." [On SFG] (Natalie).

“As we’ve grown, we’ve become much more professional, we’ve been able to take on people to deal with these roles. I’ve become much more what a trustee should be, which is much more involved with oversight, and maybe, basically, more exec, able to focus more on the strategy.” (Natalie).

As a long-standing trustee, Natalie could remember when the charity started and was operated in an opportunistic, “seat-of-the-pants” way. Therefore, she welcomed ‘professionalisation’ as synonymous with improvement. Just like the seeds of the SFG framework were planted by consultancy firms who valued quantification, efficiency, and ‘personalised responsibility’, Natalie credited “professional organisations” with SportHelp’s ‘professionalisation’:

“I think we have been remarkably lucky at getting pro bono help from very professional organisations. We had a lot from [a major consultancy firm]. Actually, the first probably came from [a major] private bank. We were their adopted charity for 2 years. That included pro bono work. They helped us with our first website, which was a cut and paste job. They helped us put together our first website. They helped us develop our logo, they helped us do a lot of things along those lines.” (Natalie).

However, the influence of professionalisation within the charity had broader implications than simply re-structuring SportHelp into a ‘quasi-market’. According to Fyfe et al. (2006), ‘professionalised’ charities tend “to develop more passive forms of citizenship, where service users are consumers of welfare delivered by a professionalised workforce of paid staff and highly trained volunteers” (p. 637). Instead of maximising participant input and seeking to empower young people (as is the goal of ‘active’ citizenship - Fyfe, Timbrell and Smith, 2006), promoting ‘passive’ forms of citizenship resonates with a ‘deficit-reduction’ approach (Petitpas et al., 2005). Considering socio-economically disadvantaged young people are envisaged as ‘problematic’ or ‘deficient’ through neoliberal rhetoric (Brown, 2015), deficit-

reduction approaches serve to ‘contain’ these adolescents by ‘plugging’ their supposed ‘deficits’ with the life skills they require to become neoliberal citizens (Coakley, 2002). As such, deficit-reduction programmes could sound enticing for the schools SportHelp work with:

“For an investment of Y, this coach has this massive impact on your kids, particularly those that can be very challenging.” (Beatrice).

This ‘value-for-money’ attitude resonates with the ‘businessification’ of charities (Bruce and Chew, 2011), and is once again outlined by Beatrice. Her reflection is indicative of the deficit-reduction approach, particularly in terms of how SportHelp can make a difference to the young people within a school:

“I think that we are at a tipping point. If we want to grow, or want to be not in 50 schools, but to be in 100, we have to get far smarter at how we prove the business case to a School head, particularly when school budgets are being squeezed from all sides. You really need to be able to say, for that £25,000 investment, we are going to produce these kinds of results in the behaviour of your children, the attendance at school, the social, thinking, emotional development, plus their physical well-being. I think it is an absolute imperative that we do that, otherwise we should just go ‘we are happy to stay where we are’, and we don’t want to grow. And we don’t need impact, and we don’t need marketing. But that’s not the direction we’re going in.” (Beatrice).

By referring to the charity’s ‘business case’, Beatrice not only demonstrated how entrenched NPM was in the organisation, but also indicated the value of re-configuring SportHelp into a ‘quasi-market’ that could ‘sell’ its services. Thus, the neoliberal technology of New Public Management re-sculpted SportHelp according to ‘market rationalities’ through developing new monitoring and reporting practices (the SFG framework) and ‘professionalisation’. In doing so, the charity maximised its chances of survival in a hyper-competitive landscape at the cost of (unwittingly) adopting a deficit-reduction approach towards

supporting socio-economically disadvantaged young people. These points are captured by Dane in what is an extensive, but deeply enlightening, reflection:

“Yeah, I completely agree [about the results not necessarily being tailored to the needs of the kids but to what the funders might want as outputs]. There’s a lot of... it’s, to be honest, if I was being crude, it would be borderline hypocrisy. What our main challenge is, is to balance the needs of the people who pay for the programs to be there in the first place with the needs of the people who access the programs. I think there are a lot of underlying, slightly naïve assumptions about the nature of the issues and the issues the young people encounter, and that’s naïveté from us, but also from funders, so they will pay on outcomes that are completely impossible to deliver, or don’t make a great deal of relevance. The whole sort of, they call it the bums on seats approach, whereby lots of funders, big funders, will fund just through people come through the door. How many people have you had come through the door in the last six months? Oh, 100? Well, get it up to 120 in 3 months’ time, brilliant. 120? Done. Have your money. But that doesn’t make a great deal of sense when we are talking about sport for development. It is actually more difficult to develop people the more people you have on your program. These are the kinds of things we are constantly battling against. Through experience, through knowledge expertise of the staff, we can go ‘OK, we’re going to show you this set of results, but we know that our decisions and our evidence and our research are influencing what is on the ground. You don’t need to know that, but we are influencing it on the ground, with the ultimate outcome or consequence of giving you a nice shiny report that says everyone is doing well’.” (Dane).

Having explored how the technology of New Public Management re-shaped SportHelp into a ‘quasi-market’, I will now look at the second theme – responsibilisation – and how it shaped the charity’s change and continuity according to ‘market rationalities’.

Responsibilisation

The second and final theme regarding how the neoliberal landscape shapes SportHelp at the macro-level is responsibilisation. The technology of responsibilisation re-configured SportHelp into a 'quasi-market' by operating in tandem with New Public Management discourse. Not only did the charity have to demonstrate a 'responsibilised autonomy' (Morison, 2000) to "generate our own results" (as Dane put it in the previous section); responsibilisation also emphasises safeguarding and compliance with procedures. The internalisation of these approaches – designed to control and manage risk – are part of the neoliberal ethos (Lorenz, 2012) and indicative of a 'good' 'quasi-market'. However, this responsibilisation re-sculpted SportHelp to prioritise managing risk instead of meeting needs (Rogowski, 2014; Rogowski, 2015):

"Our coaches cannot put themselves in compromising positions. When we do the training with them, it is as much protecting the child as it is protecting the coach, because if they form a close relationship with the young person, they are putting themselves in a vulnerable position, so they have, if a child wants to talk, then we say go somewhere very public, arrange to meet them in McDonald's, somewhere neutral where there are lots of people around, or there are lots of people around, arrange to meet them in a classroom where there are lots of windows to the outside world, have the door open, tell one of your colleagues that you are having this meeting, ask them to walk past so that they can never put themselves in a position where they are making themselves open to allegations of improper behaviour." (Natalie).

"We also have quite a lot of training open to them, so, they have annual training on what we call our 'essential operating standards', which are crucially safeguarding and child protection, safety at work, risk assessments (because a lot of them are taking kids on trips, driving the mini buses), all of these things." (Beatrice).

These examples, provided by Natalie and Beatrice, illustrate the extent to which SportHelp had internalised personal responsibility. They took pro-active steps to guarantee accountability and safeguarding, such as training coaches and providing them with ‘essential operating standards’. The points the two managers raise resonate with Rogowski’s (2014, 2015) criticism: neoliberal programmes manage risk instead of meeting young people’s needs. If a young person is in distress, a coaches’ response (in the first instance) is displaced from attending to the young person and instead focuses on questions of personal safety, whether they are in a public space, and whether they are following procedures. Operating under such a regime of bureaucracy and judgements is further complicated by the addition of extra context-specific approaches to how one should conduct themselves:

“All our coaches know how to behave. If you are helping someone to take a basketball shot, you may well have your hands on them to help them position their body, but I think, there are ways of doing it. Our coaches will always ask someone “is it OK if I touch you?” before they do. You give the young person a chance to say no, I’m not comfortable with that. Particularly, if you’ve got, if you’re working with Islamic girls, who will play sport in long trousers and tunics, that would be inappropriate. You know, there’s a way you tackle these things.” (Natalie).

For Ball (2000), these safeguarding pressures are captured by ‘performativity’: a system “that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition, and change” (p. 1). It is linked to neoliberal governmentality because, through performativity systems (such as making sure coaches comply with safeguarding procedures), what it means to be a ‘charity’ or a ‘coach’ is redefined. For instance, a ‘coach’ is not someone who attends to young people’s needs in the first instance; a coach is someone who first guarantees *their* personal safety, ensures *they* are complying with ‘essential operating standards’, and *then* attends to youth’s needs (safeguarding rules permitting). Similarly, a ‘good’ charity – as defined by ‘market rationalities’ – is not one that attends to young people’s needs *first*; it is

one that prioritises managing risk through procedures. The role of audit is fundamental in this process (Power, 1997):

“You’ll have a health and safety audit. That’s of the whole school itself, where you go in with a consultant, and you... there’s about... 50 question that you would ask the school. It’s just to make sure the school are compliant with all necessary health and safety regulations. It’s about safeguarding a) our staff, because remember, our staff are employed by SportHelp, they are not employed by the school. It’s a contract that the school have. So, coaches are deployed into schools but they are SportHelp staff, they are not the school staff. You have to take care... there are certain things by law that we have to do... so these are some of the things that we have made sure are done, so that our coaches have got the relevant training, have they had equity and diversity training, have they had mentoring training, have they had safeguarding training... have they had first aid...? You know? All of the things that for us, makes that person a high-quality coach, that they can go into a school and deliver a fully-fledged SportHelp programme.” (Lisa).

The neoliberal technology of responsabilisation, through all these safeguarding procedures, follows a ‘logic’ whereby a programme or coach can only be ‘good’ when risk is managed and all the ‘essential operating standards’ have been met. However, akin to how Giroux (1999) argues that young people in a neoliberal society are not “at risk” but are “the risk”, all these standards serve to re-shape SportHelp into a ‘quasi-market’ that focuses on ‘containing’ risk through deficit-reduction. Despite the extent to which SportHelp internalised the technology of responsabilisation, the increasing levels of bureaucracy which accompanied safeguarding procedures and ‘essential operating standards’ was a source of friction between coaches and managers:

“What I try to communicate to the coaches is that we are not creating safety training or risk assessment training because we love bureaucracy, but because we want our coaches and

participants to be safe and deliver great programs, and for us to be able to expand. That's why we do SFG, ultimately, so we can prove our model works, so we can raise more money, so that we can open more programs." (Beatrice).

Beatrice's arguments to assuage the coaches' frustrations are indicative of how responsabilisation and NPM re-sculpted SportHelp into a 'quasi-market'. In a market-based paradigm, a 'good' charity is characterised by evidencing their outcomes and managing risk in relation to 'economic rationalities'. Doing this is likelier to attract funds ("raise more money") which, in turn, means SportHelp's model works "so that we can open more programmes". The extent to which the neoliberal 'blame culture' of individual responsibility⁶⁰ re-configured the public sector was observed by Natalie:

"We're going a bit mad, really. We have now a culture where we are always looking for someone to blame, and you can't just accept that, tragically, accidents will happen. Everyone is obsessed with protecting themselves from litigation. A lot of what has happened is good, clearly, ultimately protecting children is a good thing, and we are working very much at the cutting edge, we are working with children that have difficult lives, so, of course, that's all good, and we should embrace it, but it can be quite difficult at times, because it does stop you from doing what you instinctively feel is right. But generally, it tends to be a good thing. Procedures do get worse and worse and worse." (Natalie).

Her reflection about "it does stop you from doing what you instinctively feel is right" is particularly powerful, and captures Ball's (2000) central thesis about performativity: just like neoliberal governmentality, performativity re-shapes *who we are*. Instincts are gradually eroded and partly replaced by procedures, demonstrations of individual responsibility, and compliance with 'essential operating standards'. The consequence of succumbing to responsabilisation, as Natalie indicated, is that:

⁶⁰ The 'individualisation of risk' (Hamilton, 2014).

“There’s a danger that the tail wags the dog, and you lose sight of what you’re really here to do. Gavin [the founder and Chief Executive Officer of SportHelp] sometimes throws his hands in the air and exclaims “I just can’t bear these procedures, I just want to be out there working with the children and not writing bloody procedures”. We’re losing sight of what we are here to do. That’s something he [Gavin] has to manage, the process.” (Natalie).

Natalie’s point about “you lose sight of what you’re really here to do” resonates with how responsibilisation, as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, re-sculpted SportHelp. Her quote captures Rogowski’s (2014, 2015) earlier point about how managing risk (through an over-abundance of safeguarding procedures) becomes one of the charity’s focal points *instead* of prioritising young people’s needs. This is a consequence of SportHelp re-configuring itself into a ‘quasi-market’.

By outlining the two themes in Part one (New Public Management and responsibilisation), I have shown how both technologies of neoliberal governmentality re-shaped SportHelp into a ‘quasi-market’. Through developing monitoring and reporting practices rooted in measurement, alongside professionalisation and the demonstration of individual responsibility via the abundant implementation of procedures, SportHelp re-sculpted how they governed themselves. As Ball et al. (2011) suggest, “policy provides a vocabulary for thinking about and talking about practice, reflecting on it and evaluating it”. SportHelp’s vocabulary, as characteristic of a ‘quasi-market’, was the language of businesses:

“With a little bit of research and consultancy, we were able to streamline and slim down all the things we requested, and then disseminated outwards. It began a sense of, yeah, trimming the fat of the organization, and SFG, going to that, is currency. It is the language of the organisation; it is not simply an evaluation tool. When we talk about SFG, the organization talks about SFG. It is, or should be, the language that everyone holds in common, be they from the coaching cohort, from the fundraising cohort, if someone says, what do you do? “Oh, I help to develop the social, thinking,

emotional, physical skills”, in the first instance it builds an organizational vocabulary. Then it grows and builds and organisational philosophy, and then it grows and builds and organisational currency, whereby we can almost buy, or sell, or trade, in SFG, almost like you would do on the stock market, because it has that almost explicit, tangible, existence.” (Dane).

Dane spoke of “organisational currency” and “buy, or sell, or trade, in SFG, almost like you would do on the stock market”. This internalisation of neoliberal values at the macro-level did not happen as a result of coercive subjugation; it occurred inconspicuously as a consequence of neoliberal governmentality governing ‘at a distance’ (Foucault, 2008; Rose, 2000; Ball, 2000). What effect did SportHelp’s re-configuration into a ‘quasi-market’ at the macro-level have on the charity’s youth sport programmes at the micro-level? That is what I will explore next, in Part two, by illustrating how the internalisation of NPM and responsabilisation promoted a deficit-reduction approach towards supporting young people. Under this light, which assumes socio-economically disadvantaged young people are ‘deficient’ or ‘problematic’ (Brown, 2015), SportHelp used its sport programmes to ‘address’ these ‘deficits’ by re-shaping disadvantaged adolescents into neoliberal citizens.

Part two: How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp’s youth sport programmes?

Part two of this chapter deals with the second half of my research question by examining SportHelp’s youth sport programmes at the micro-level. Through the lenses of managers, coaches, and young people, this section compiles a total of nine themes which depict how the causal mechanism of neoliberal governmentality influenced the charity’s youth sport programmes. Relying on data gathered through interviews and observations, this section is divided into three parts. The first deals with themes pertaining to managers’ perspectives, the second focuses on coaches’ views, and the third examines young people’s experiences. Despite this range of actors situated in different positions within SportHelp’s

hierarchy, all three groups' perspectives were overwhelmingly 'in sync': the charity's youth sport programmes took a deficit-reduction approach and aimed to re-shape young people into neoliberal citizens.

Managers espoused sport evangelist beliefs (uncritical assumptions about the inherent power of sport to improve young people's lives) and understood 'improvement' in terms of deficit-reduction. This entailed equipping young people with traits they were assumed to lack⁶¹: life skills, individual responsibility, and discipline. Considering sport could be used to instil these neoliberal values in adolescents, managers envisaged sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality. To put this technology 'into action', managers recruited coaches who were 'transformative leaders' that could 'transform' young people from being 'deficient' into 'good' neoliberal citizens.

The narrative outlined by the themes pertaining to the managers was emulated in the coaches' perspectives about SportHelp's youth sport programmes. The coaches, as sport evangelists, also believed in the inherent power of sport to 'improve' young people's lives. Viewing themselves as the 'transformative leaders' the managers wanted them to be, coaches emphasised life skills, individual responsibility, and discipline as the hallmarks of a 'good' person. Thus, they harnessed sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality. Their success in this process was rooted in the non-formal education space SportHelp operated in. Coaches developed caring relationships with young people, which, in turn, encouraged young people to *want* to internalise the messages of individual responsibility and discipline imparted by their 'transformative leader' coaches.

Lastly, the themes pertaining to young people's perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes echoed both the managers' and coaches' views. Young people internalised sport evangelist beliefs and emphasised the value of individual responsibility and discipline towards becoming

⁶¹ This is a neoliberal assumption which views socio-economically disadvantaged young people as *inherently* deficient on account of their lower socio-economic status (McInerney and Smyth, 2015).

‘better’ people. This showed how effective the coaches’ use of sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality was. Furthermore, adolescents readily internalised neoliberal values for the same reason I highlighted in the previous paragraph: SportHelp operated in the realm of non-formal education. This meant a range of young people’s needs were met, in turn encouraging young people to *want* to attend the charity’s session and to *want* to learn from their coaches, thus internalising neoliberal values of citizenship.

What are the managers’ perspectives about the value of SportHelp’s youth sport programmes?

Three themes are relevant to this question: managers as sport evangelists, sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, and coaches as ‘transformative leaders’. The charity’s managers believed in the inherent ‘greatness’ of sport as a panacea to improve the lives of the socio-economically disadvantaged young people they worked with. Since this ‘improvement’ was carried out *through* the medium of sport, and ‘improvement’ was characterised by the acquisition of individual responsibility and discipline, sport constituted a technology of neoliberal governmentality. Using this deficit-reduction approach, managers envisaged ‘helping’ young people by re-sculpting their notions of personhood to align with individual responsibility and discipline; the hallmarks of a ‘good’ citizen. To put this technology ‘into action’, the managers relied on coaches who could inculcate neoliberal values of ‘good’ personhood *through* sport. Thus, these coaches had to be *more* than ‘*just*’ coaches; they needed to be ‘transformative leaders’ capable of harnessing sport to ‘transform’ (re-sculpt) youths’ personhood.

Managers as 'sport evangelists'

SportHelp managers unequivocally believed in the power of sport as a tool for education, development, and social regeneration. Their assumptions – that sport is inherently a force for good – were voiced passionately and convincingly. This veneration of sport (which Giulianotti, 2004, refers to as 'sport evangelism') rested on the belief that sport is a unique panacea ideally suited to help socio-economically disadvantaged young people develop. As such, the charity managers repeatedly underlined how their work was inextricably wedded to sport. The significance of sport as a 'medium' to support adolescents was clearly articulated by Beatrice, the charity's Chief Operations Officer:

"We have, you know, so in the case of SportHelp, you have your mission, which is to help young people, mainly in disadvantaged communities, achieve their potential using sport as the medium. It is very straightforward. If it is not related to that goal, we don't do it."

The vision of sport as a tool capable of unlocking a young person's potential did not constitute parroting the party line. It represented a deeply entrenched belief about the 'mythical' power of sport (Anderson, 2012) as a vehicle for 'healing' the 'deficits' in disadvantaged young people's lives:

"I completely buy into the vision that sport can do so much to teach children things that they aren't necessarily learning through the lack of role models, which makes me despair of society, at the moment." (Natalie).

The core of these entrenched attitudes towards sport are rooted in what Houlihan et al. (2009) call the 'storylines' of sport. These 'storylines' refer to uncritical assumptions about the greatness of sport and its capacity to "teach children things that they aren't necessarily learning", as Natalie put it. The problem with these storylines is that, though they are not necessarily false, the strength of people's belief in them does not match the quantity or quality of evidence available. This is why 'sport evangelists' is a term which accurately captures SportHelp managers' veneration of sport:

“And if you do your research, and you go back to how sports came about, sports has always been something that has been used for leadership, for development, to empower... people, to be able to achieve another level, because sports brings a teamwork element, it brings a lot of elements that young people need to help them to become stronger and more confident in life, so this is what we’re trying to do with these young people.” (Lisa).

“If you look at the difference between private schools and state schools, private schools are... and this is dating back to, like, 200 years ago. They’ve always seen the benefits of sports, not only the concept, they’ve always seen... most of our leaders that we’ve had have all been in schools where they were... very strong in sport. Because there are certain attributes that you get from sport, the leadership, the teamwork... you become a different type of character through sport, so, these kind of institutions have already grasped that. They are at a completely different level.” (Lisa).

Like Houlihan et al. (2009) point out in relation to the ‘storylines’ of sport, none of Lisa’s arguments are necessarily false. Furthermore, akin to Natalie, Lisa firmly believed sport *itself* equips young people with life skills. The problem with this uncritical appraisal of the ‘storylines’ of sport is that such analyses are devoid from contextual appreciations of young people’s lives (Kelly, 2011). Could it be, as Coalter (2007b) argues, that the pupils at private schools “achieved another level” not *because* of sport, but instead thanks to the head start they received in terms of a better education, higher social capital, and financial stability?

The inherent belief in the value of sport was further underlined by Beatrice. She spoke about SportHelp’s contribution to a coalition that is lobbying the government about the significance of sport in society, further indicating the ‘mythical’ status (Coalter, 2010) afforded to sport as a panacea:

“Yeah, well, what we are trying to achieve is a common language for how we describe sport for development, what it is, and what it does. Everybody talks about it in a different way, and really

by coming together to have a more powerful voice with government... [...] We want to talk to the Department of Health, and the Department of Education, and say “sport is absolutely crucial to sort out obesity agendas, diabetes in kids, sport, in the education sector, is incredibly important”. So, what we are trying to say is that by having a coalition saying the same things, and talking the same language, even though we are delivering in different ways, you know, we need to become more powerful by having one voice.”

The managers’ ‘reification’ of sport was underscored by a deficit-reduction approach, as Lisa suggested:

“... when... we’re looking at mentoring and role modelling, that has to be delivered through sport. It has to be through sport. Because if we’re not being able to grasp those elements through sport, then we’re not really teaching our young people the key concepts of what they need to learn.”

For her, sport was fundamental to teach young people “the key concepts of what they *need* to learn”, in the same way that Natalie earlier indicated that sport can be used to “teach children things they aren’t necessarily learning”. The assumption being made by SportHelp managers was that the socio-economically disadvantaged young people they worked with lacked *something* that sport could provide. And it was only ‘sport’ – not physical activity or other programmes – which could ‘help’ young people:

“We actually found that the dance programs were hard to get up and running, and again, you can’t do matches, you can’t aspire to be in a team and go off and play, and it was much harder to measure, to evaluate.” (Natalie).

We had some great workshops, and some great coaches, but, I think, one of the experiences we offer through the sport is to get together and play other schools through leagues and matches, and it was a lot harder to do that through drama. It was also much harder to evaluate. (Natalie).

This demarcation between 'sport' and other activities (even physical ones like dance) serves to further exemplify the extent to which the SportHelp managers venerated sport. Consequently, the discourse employed by the upper echelons of the charity revolved around powerfully embedded beliefs about sport as a tool for social regeneration by reducing young people's 'deficits'. These beliefs were largely uncritical and taken for granted, which indicated an implicit assumption of sport's prowess to inherently teach life skills and, generally, improve young people's lives. This 'improvement' consisted in addressing young people's 'deficits' by teaching them how to become individually responsible. Therefore, as the next theme outlines, sport constituted a technology of neoliberal governmentality.

Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality

SportHelp managers' belief in sport as a tool for social regeneration was rooted in what they claimed was sport's capacity to reshape personhood and citizenship. For them, sport was powerful *because* it could be used to re-sculpt young people's attitudes and behaviours. As such, sport was treated as a technology of neoliberal governmentality capable of transforming youths' 'bad' attributes into 'good' ones. In turn, managers argued that once a young person had been reshaped through sport, they could apply their newfound form of citizenship to the other domains of their lives:

"It's very important for us to say to the young people 'look, within these four elements that you have, which is the social, which is the thinking, which is the physical... you know, we can help you to achieve these attributes, and if you can get to these attributes, it can help you to become a better person'. It means that these life skills which you now take on, not only for a sporting element, you can use them within your everyday life, within the school, and it will help you to become better, rather than you just thinking 'OK, I can only apply this to sport'" (Lisa).

Lisa's correlation between sport and 'becoming a better person' is an argument often extolled by 'sport evangelists', particularly when it comes to using youth sport programmes to teach 'life skills' (Petitpas et al., 2005). Lisa's association between the life skills approach to sport and the assumption it enhances young people's positive development was further outlined by Dane:

"I guess if there was a catch all kind of sentence to be concise, what we want is the young people on our programs to feel like they have been equipped with those skills: Social, Emotional, Thinking, Physical skills, so they have control of their own positive development. We use sport to do that."

These views are tied to neoliberal governmentality because they constitute what Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) describe as an 'adult-designed template' of what it means to be a 'productive citizen'. Of what it means to be a 'good person'. Therefore, a 'good young person' is someone who uses sport to develop their social, emotional, thinking, and physical skills and who can apply them to the different domains of their life:

"You cannot behave in one way for your coach, and another way for your teacher. That's not life skills. It has to be consistent, so when you're giving them the discipline and the consistencies... that's what we mean by toeing the line. You know? Because at the end of the day... the representation that you have of yourself must be consistent, otherwise your standards start to drop and fluctuate... and if they fluctuate in school, what are you going to give to us on the court? So you try to balance them out all the time... 'If you can behave like this for my session, surely you can behave like that for your teacher session!'" (Lisa).

Therefore, the managers' conceptualisation of sport can be seen as a technology of neoliberal governmentality. In addition to re-shaping personhood through sport, managers drew a relationship between personal responsibility and a young person's development (Kumar, 2012). Under this neoliberal light, the young person who embraces personal responsibility to change – what Lisa described as "if you

can behave like this for my session, surely you can behave like that for your teacher session!" – is on their way to re-sculpting themselves as a 'better person'.

The SportHelp managers' perceptions also resonated with the neoliberal assumption that socio-economically disadvantaged young people are inherently 'damaged' or 'broken', and thus require their personhood 'fixed' (McInerney and Smyth, 2015):

"I think some of the young people from slightly more chaotic backgrounds, backgrounds of imbalance, or ill-discipline, or disadvantage, deprivation, are probably looking for an alternative. It is quite a broad term, but they are looking for opportunities to vent their frustration, to get some rubbish out of their system, to have meaningful relationships which are not negative, let's not forget that a lot of these kids are from parts of the world where there's not a lot of positivity, either within their house or outside of their house, their location, where they live. I think they are looking for positivity, they are looking for emotional feedback, altruism, reciprocity, call it what you will, they are looking for meaningful relationships, and one of the things we ask our coaches to be and develop in their selves in the ability to be a role model." (Dane).

"I think for a lot of these children, they come from very dysfunctional families, where maybe they have a single mother, living in small accommodation, 3 or 4 children, all by different fathers, and it is really pretty grim." (Natalie).

"It's difficult, because... you've got young people that have... some young people that are on our programme maybe they do self-harm, some young people, like I said, they are parents, they are looking after brothers and sisters... their parents might be drug addicts, their parents might have mental health issues, their parents might not be able to read or write... there are so many issues that, for them, just... being... you can see it in their faces, they just want to be a part of something. I don't think that's a crime, to want to be a part of something." (Lisa).

Dane's, Lisa's, and Natalie's views align with the 'Family Stress Model' (McLoyd et al., 2009) often used to suggest the difficulties disadvantaged young people face. The model forwards that youths from lower social-economic backgrounds have more stressors (such as the ones Dane and Natalie outlined) to contend with in their lives. Whilst this *may* be true, it is a neoliberal assumption to treat disadvantaged young people as inherently 'deficient' and in need of having their personhood re-shaped through sport, as Lisa pointed out:

"It's not just about 'these young people are down, or, they are from deprived backgrounds'. I hate that. I always play devil's advocate, and I say to, you know, our senior management team, that we label our young people, but they don't see themselves as being deprived." (Lisa).

Despite this singular view amongst the managers, the SportHelp managers (including Lisa) broadly espoused the need to re-shape young people:

"I think, in terms of their expectations, they are probably getting an environment or a platform for person improvement, and within that environment, there's probably the expectancy to build certain relationships, like a relationship with their coach, a relationship with the other young people on their program." (Dane).

Therefore, SportHelp managers not only believed in the power of sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality which could re-shape citizenship by 'countering' youths' 'deficiencies'; they also firmly believed that the personhood values young people acquired during sport could automatically be extended to the rest of these youths' lives. This assumption that life skills gained in sport are applicable to other domains is both pervasive (Haudenhuyse et al., 2014; Turnnidge et al., 2014) and serves to further illustrate the extent to which the managers uncritically extolled the value of sport for social regeneration. The third and final theme with regards to the managers' perspectives encompasses the use of sports coaches who served as 'transformative leaders' to put the technology of sport 'into action'.

Coaches as ‘transformative leaders’

In the managers’ eyes, the sports coaches’ role was to ‘transform’ young people’s personhood using the neoliberal technology of sport. By inculcating life skills through sport, the role of coaches was to re-shape adolescents’ citizenship *through* sport. Consequently, the charity required coaches who were *more* than ‘just’ coaches:

“The majority of coaches, when we recruit them, it is very clear that a SportHelp coach aren’t just technically proficient at coaching and their sport. A SportHelp coach is more than just a great sports coach, they are a mentor, they have a different relationship with participants at a school than a teacher. It’s a different dynamic, the fact that they are called ‘coach’ instead of ‘Mr. this’ or ‘Mrs. that’, is a different dynamic between them and the young people that play sport with them. So, I think we are very clear when we are recruiting that we are looking for something extra rather than just a great sports coach.” (Beatrice).

Beatrice’s description of a SportHelp coach echoes Morgan and Bush’s (2016) articulation of the sports coach as a ‘transformative leader’ – somebody who goes beyond teaching a sporting skillset and instead aims to broadly improve young people’s lives⁶². The conceptualisation of sports coaches as ‘transformative leaders’ was further echoed by Dane:

“We talk about influencing social skills, then we need people who are social role models. We talk about developing thinking or cognitive skills, then we need coaches who are skilled in emotion management, or cognitive management, who are intelligent as well to understand other people’s mind sets, and how to influence them.” (Dane).

⁶² I should clarify that a ‘transformative coach’ for Morgan and Bush (2016), like Shields (2010), begins with “questions of justice and democracy” (p. 559). In SportHelp’s case, a ‘transformative coach’ begins with an emphasis on individual responsibility and discipline in young people. These are points I will elaborate on as the chapter unfolds, and I will fully expand upon in the Discussion chapter.

Just like sport was assumed to address a wide range of issues (social, thinking, emotional, and physical skills), SportHelp managers felt these life skills could only be fostered in young people by coaches who *already* embodied such characteristics and behaviours. The possibility of employing coaches who deviated from SportHelp's brand of 'transformative leadership' threatened the charity's livelihood:

"I think for coaches that maybe see the organisation as... just being elite, I think they need to change their perception, because I think they can cause damage to their school programme."
(Lisa).

Consequently, SportHelp managers assumed that the sports coaches' capacity to be 'transformative leaders' was tied to the 'mythical' status these managers afforded to sport. Coaches could be 'transformative leaders' *because* sport, as a platform, implicitly enabled the improvement of young people's lives. Despite the faith placed in coaches to put the neoliberal technology of sport 'into action', the managers suggested there was a limit to how the coaches could support young people:

"You could cause damage if you don't... and you know... most definitely, you've hit it on the nail. If you don't have the right skills, dependent on what the needs of that young person are, if you don't have those skills, you shouldn't really be working with that young person. You can only do what's in your remit. So, within your remit, if you can help them, brilliant. If you notice that that person is... not... behaving or responding in the ways that you want, and they are not getting anything out of it, I do think there has to be a stage, again, we are not the right intervention." (Lisa).

"When you have a particularly challenging child, obviously they'll have their head of year, and external agency like social workers coming in, the SportHelp coach... you'll have lots of individuals around that child. The SportHelp coach needs to understand what their role is within that

consortium of people that's trying to help with other issues that that child is trying to face."
(Beatrice).

Lisa's and Beatrice's reflections capture the paradox of the coach as a 'transformative leader'. On the one hand, a central criticism levelled at 'transformative leaders' is whether one individual can singlehandedly redress youths' education or personhood (Shields, 2010). As Lisa admits, there are times "we are not the right intervention". Yet, on the other hand, as per Beatrice's observations that a coach must be aware of their role within a "consortium of people", how can SportHelp be sure it is the *coach themselves* who is transforming young people's lives? Perhaps coaches' abilities as 'transformative leaders', as Coakley (2002) suggests, has less to do with sport *itself* and more to do with *how* sport is used?

Regardless of the extent to which a coach can significantly transform a young person's life, the charity managers were aware that SportHelp coaches needed to be supported in their endeavour to resculpt adolescents' personhood. As I forwarded in the earlier responsabilisation theme, how the charity supported coaches was sometimes a point of contention, particularly if it entailed greater bureaucracy and compliance with procedures:

"So, I think there is certainly, and you've probably heard it when you've talked to coaches, there is tension between the centre, and in my experience, that is not at all unusual, working in a charity where you have a head office, and you have lots of people working, doing the hard graft, the coalface, basically, so I think we constantly need to think about how we communicate any changes in policy, or changes in training, or why we are doing 'Sport For Good' [the framework]. To keep reminding coaches we are doing this to make our programs better, not because we love creating forms or putting them on training courses they might think are irrelevant. I think that internal communication is something we need to get better and better at." (Beatrice).

“You do need a lot of resourcing thrown onto coaches, because they are the practitioners, they are the bedrocks of the whole organization, as our CEO continues to say, if it wasn’t for the coaches we wouldn’t be here, and we wouldn’t have jobs, we wouldn’t have salaries, we wouldn’t be able to afford clothes, or eat, or anything like that! So, whilst they are frustrating at some points, they put a hell of a lot into the process, and we are here to help them, to support them to do that.”
(Dane).

What these tensions indicate is that, despite valuing the sports coaches’ work and believing in what the sports coaches as ‘transformative leaders’ can achieve, there were instances where the views of the upper echelons of SportHelp jarred with those of the coaches. Nevertheless, the managers viewed coaches as indispensable to the charity; it was these ‘transformative leaders’ who harnessed the power of sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality to re-shape adolescents’ personhood. This illustrates how the three themes regarding the managers’ perspectives⁶³ operate in concert. The managers assumed sport is an inherently suitable platform to improve young people’s lives, where ‘improvement’ is understood in terms of individual responsibility, acquiring life skills, and being disciplined. To use sport as a technology of governmentality which can instil those traits in adolescents by ‘plugging’ the ‘deficits’, the managers employed coaches who (given their experience of sport) had *already* ‘absorbed’ the assumed qualities of emotional regulation and person development inherent in sport. In turn, such coaches could become the ‘transformative leaders’ the managers wanted them to be.

⁶³ Managers as sport evangelists, sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, and coaches as ‘transformative leaders’.

What are the sports coaches' perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?

Three themes are relevant to this question: coaches as sport evangelists, sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, and caring for young people. The similarity between these three themes and the ones outlined by the managers is not coincidental; the coaches' perspectives echoed the managers'. Like the upper echelons of the charity, coaches uncritically viewed sport as an inherently suitable platform to improve young people's lives. Akin to how sport was about *more* than just sport, the coaches saw themselves as 'transformative leaders' who were *more* than just coaches. Echoing the managers' vision for SportHelp's coaching staff, the coaches I interviewed considered themselves 'bricoleurs' who harnessed sport's innate capacity for social regeneration and deficit-reduction. By emphasising individual responsibility and discipline as 'social regeneration', the coaches' role was to put the neoliberal technology of sport 'into action'. In doing so, the coaches aimed to fulfil the managers' ambitions of 'improving' adolescents' lives by re-shaping their personhood into that of a neoliberal citizen. However, what successfully enabled the coaches to act as 'transformative leaders' was the extent to which they demonstrated and modelled caring behaviours towards young people. This, as I have previously argued, is one of the key ways non-formal education can support young people in a manner formal education cannot. It is a point Beatrice hinted at in the theme of 'coaches as 'transformative leaders'' when she highlighted the different dynamic between coaches and teachers:

"The fact that they are called 'coach' instead of 'Mr. this' or 'Mrs. that', is a different dynamic between them and the young people that play sport with them."

Coaches as 'sport evangelists'

Just like the SportHelp managers, the coaches espoused 'sport evangelist' notions about the inherent power and value of sport. The life skills the charity wanted coaches to inculcate into young people through sport were selected by the managers (after a lengthy consultation process), and packaged in the form of a twelve-item framework. This framework – SFG – encompassed the previously discussed categories of social, thinking, emotional, and physical development, which, in turn, were split into more specific attributes (such as teamwork or communication)⁶⁴. However, the life skills SFG championed, according to the coaches, were *already* present in sport:

"My understanding of it is that SFG is all around us, we do it, unconsciously, and now SportHelp are trying to make us aware of when we are doing it, and tell participants that they are working on SFG right now. Basically, it is just trying to get them to realise that they are working on a social skill, thinking, emotional, physical... and just drumming into them that if you do this, this is the outcome type of thing." (Karl).

On the one hand, as Karl suggested, SFG constituted an attempt by SportHelp to distil the value of sport by giving it a language⁶⁵. Though this constitutes an attempt to address a frequent criticism of life skills approaches (that they are poorly defined - Danish, 2002), underlying SFG was a 'sport evangelist' assumption that sport *already* – "unconsciously", as Karl put it – enhanced young people's development. SFG was also imbued with neoliberal rhetoric: "drumming into them that if **you** do this, this is the outcome".

⁶⁴ In the interests of anonymity, I have not disclosed the full framework.

⁶⁵ It is worth noting how 'capturing' the power of sport matters for SportHelp. Earlier in the chapter, Beatrice spoke about SportHelp belonging to a coalition who were trying to come up with a common language about the value of sport.

When SFG was unveiled to the coaches, their reaction further illustrated their deeply held beliefs about sport's innate capacity to improve young people's lives:

"When it actually started to launch to coaches it wasn't really a good response. 'Why are we doing this, are you trying to undermine my coaching?' 'I already do this in my sessions, now I have to explain it' and that kind of stuff. I see where they are coming from, but at the same time, SportHelp are trying to put a stamp on SFG, trying to sell it other places, so I thought, they obviously need our help and our research into doing it to help them. I see where they are coming from, both sides, but, yeah, it is tough because it is just going to give us more work than if we wasn't to have SFG, or maybe explain things in more depth than we would have." (Karl).

As Karl explained, many coaches – including Karl himself – subscribed to the idea that the life skills in SFG were things coaches *already* did in their sessions. So, whilst SFG constituted an attempt to clarify *how* sport can improve young people's lives, it was based on an uncritical assumption that sport automatically *does* improve adolescents' lives (Coalter, 2007A). Furthermore, the breadth of SFG (which spanned across social, thinking, emotional, and physical skills) indicated the range of domains managers and coaches assumed sport could impact on. To reflect the supposition that sport was innately about *more* than just sport, the coaches generally saw themselves as *more* than just coaches. They saw themselves as 'bricoleurs' (Bush and Silk, 2010):

"The best coaches in the world, regardless which sport it is, they are not coaches. They are something else, something more, something I hate to be called is a teacher. I'm not a teacher. I manage technique, I manage emotions, I manage these skills... I'm quite a manager, you know." (Alfred).

As 'bricoleurs' who did more than simply develop a sporting skill, coaches aligned themselves with the vision SportHelp managers had for them as 'transformative leaders' for underprivileged adolescents

(Morgan and Bush, 2016). Therefore, as ‘bricoleurs’ and ‘transformative leaders’, the coaches felt their remit was to use sport to ‘transform’ young people by equipping them with the social, thinking, emotional, and physical skills they required:

“We talk about these skills [the ones in SFG] a lot, and we relate them to certain drills and practices, communication is a big one, it is a big part of our philosophy, being able to communicate on the court. I think, each coach will probably integrate these in their philosophy in different ways. Communication might be important at [names his school], but it might not be as important as physical fitness at another program. I think it is about the coach and their persona, and their program, and how they implement these things, which ones are more important than the other ones.” (Vincent).

Despite using sport to ‘transform’ young people, my observations suggested there was a dissonance between what the coaches said and what they did⁶⁶. The bulk of coaches’ sessions were dedicated to teaching sport skills and tactics, not SFG:

“Realistically, when you get them all together is during an afterschool session, and you don’t want to waste the whole practice doing this [completing a questionnaire about life skills as part of monitoring SFG]. And that’s not really what the kids want. They turn up at the end of the day expecting to run about and play some basketball, and you make them sit down and do that. They are not going to be very motivated by that. You have to pick and choose your times.” (Vincent).

So, whilst there was limited time to address the components of the SFG framework, coaches nonetheless *assumed* sport was a medium through which the SFG elements were transmitted. Jake, on a few occasions, touched upon this dichotomy. He considered himself a table tennis coach who could,

⁶⁶ This highlights the value of participant observations, and collecting data at the *actual* level of critical realism’s stratified view of reality.

through sport, teach young people a great deal about table tennis and life. However, he felt SFG was “another headache” because SportHelp seemed to assume coaches were psychologists and social workers, which was not the case. On two separate instances, Jake dispiritedly mused “the school think I have a magical solution. They have social workers, specialists... and they can’t solve the problem [of a young person’s behaviour problems]. How can I?” Though Jake indicated it was hard to implement SFG, he *still assumed* that sport was a vehicle which could improve young people’s lives.

The more I observed Vincent’s, Jake’s, and Karl’s sessions, the more I noticed the extent to which they held deeply entrenched sport evangelist beliefs. Though they devoted almost the entirety of their sessions to sporting skills and technique, they maintained views about sport, somehow, being capable of ‘transforming’ young people. Vincent’s sessions were infused with basketball terminology, technical drills, and seriousness. They were not for beginners, and they were imbued with a strong sense of ‘performance matters’. On one of my later visits, an adolescent I had not seen before came to the session. He was tactically and technically inferior to everyone else, and, when the group had to try to complete a complex series of drills, this young boy held the group back. As frustration towards him grew, and the environment turned acrimonious, Vincent kept telling the team to repeat the drill until they got it right. At the end of the session, Vincent reminded everyone about the value of communication (one of the SFG elements). In addition to this being one of the rare moments where Vincent discussed SFG with the young people, I wondered what the young boy – whom I never saw again – learned from the session. That if you are not skilled enough, it is OK to be treated with disdain by your teammates? Vincent rationalised the tension in the sports hall as part of playing sport and learning resilience.

Jake’s sessions, like Vincent’s, were heavily weighted towards the development of table tennis tactics and technique. He frequently corrected technique and posture, and authoritatively admonished his players for not making enough of an effort. Nevertheless, the young people clearly respected him, and not out of fear. This was the case even when Jake modelled questionable behaviours, like repeatedly

telling Mitch he was “too nice”. When Mitch responded “I like being nice”, Jake retaliated with “you like missing shots, too”. There was a joviality to Mitch that Jake wanted to stamp out because it got in the way of making Mitch a more aggressive player.

Lastly, though I only observed one of Karl’s sessions, the themes in it were in line with those in Jake’s and Vincent’s: hard work and competition. Therefore, what became apparent in Vincent’s, Jake’s, and Karl’s sessions was the strong emphasis on sporting skills and competition; the acquisition of positive life skills was largely treated as an inherent by-product of playing sport. The extent to which the coaches subscribed to the tenets of ‘sport evangelism’ became apparent during instances of high performance or competition. In these moments, coaches role modelled maladaptive behaviours without considering how such behaviours were at odds with the assumed positive developmental traits embedded in sport. These inappropriate conducts entailed exhibiting visible signs of frustration and dejection during matches or shouting at a young person for (repeatedly) being incorrectly placed on the basketball court. Further examples include Vincent kicking a ball away when a young person was bouncing it (when they should not have been), or Jake reminding his players that they should always be more aggressive.

Consequently, there was a dissonance between what the coaches said and did in their sessions. Though coaches saw themselves as ‘transformative leaders’ and ‘bricoleurs’, most of the sport sessions were devoted to teaching a sport skill under the assumption that young people would – somehow, through sport – acquire positive life skills. Furthermore, coaches continued to uncritically believe in the innate goodness of sport despite (at times) modelling maladaptive behaviours which were neither ‘positive’ nor appropriate ‘life skills’ (‘aggression’ was not part of the SFG framework!). This suggests coaches were ‘sport evangelists’ who held deeply entrenched beliefs about the inherent power of sport. By holding this view, as I will outline in the next theme, coaches assumed sport improved young people’s lives by addressing youths’ ‘deficits’. This ‘improvement’ was tied to notions of individual responsibility and discipline; in other words, coaches used sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality.

Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality

Acting as ‘transformative leaders’, coaches used the neoliberal technology of sport to re-shape young people’s notions of personhood in alignment with values of individual responsibility and discipline. By “... drumming into them [young people] that if you do this [adhere to the SFG life skills framework], this is the outcome type of thing” (as Karl put it earlier), the coaches fulfilled the ‘vision’ SportHelp managers had for the charity’s youth sport programmes: the use of sport to re-sculpt young people’s personhood. As was the case with the managers, person-development was inextricably wedded to sport:

“Each coach probably spins it differently, but certainly, if you ask that to some of the boys here, I hope they would say that it is not just about coming to play basketball, it is about developing you as a person. Helping you become more mature and grow, so when you leave school, you can do what it is you want to do. Basketball is just a tool to drive through that and help that progression, because, in all honesty, a lot of the kids, they won’t play basketball again.” (Vincent).

“My priority here is to use table tennis as a tool to build great human beings.” (Alfred).

“SportHelp, they kinda want their model participant, to finish off as a role model. Not just sports, but academically. What I do, I try to always bring up that ‘if basketball doesn’t work for you, we still want you to be a perfect – not perfect - but a really good citizen in the country’” (Karl).

Coaches’ notions of personhood were tied to a neoliberal ethos. As Foucault (2008) advanced in his discussion of *homo oeconomicus*, neoliberal governmentality re-shapes what it means to be a “great human being” (as Alfred mentioned) or a “really good citizen” (as per Karl). Under neoliberal auspices, ‘great human beings’ are entrepreneurs of themselves, producing their own happiness and self-improvement. Therefore, to prepare young people to ‘do what they want to do’ (to paraphrase Vincent), young people need to be ‘taught’ to align with free market values (Spaaij, 2009):

"I am all about making them into this model citizen, always giving them an example, for example, one of the sixth formers, he keeps coming late to breakfast club, and, he's 17, so I'm saying 'next year, you're going to be 18, you're going to go to work. If you turn up 3 or 4 times late to work, what's going to happen? You're going to lose your job'" (Karl).

In his quote, Karl alludes to the importance of timeliness as a precursor to keep a job. Whilst I am not suggesting that being on time is the hallmark of neoliberal citizenship, it is an example of individual responsibility: 'if you do not do X, consequence Y will happen'. A further example of what SportHelp's coaches valued in relation to shaping young people's personhood was offered by Vincent:

"An expectation is that basketball is a privilege for them, that they are here to learn, and that they are here to study, and that basketball is not going anywhere. That it can be a big part of their lives, for as long as they want it to be, but it shouldn't be dictating their lives at this stage, it should be academics and basketball, and if they are not meeting their expectations with their teachers, and their parents, regarding their grades, and their punctuality, and their time management, and everything else, then, you know, the knock-on effect is they lose some of their basketball privileges."

Again, there is an emphasis on individual responsibility in the form of young people's marks, punctuality, and time management. As I previously discussed in the results focusing on the managers' views, coaches made a neoliberal correlation between a youth's personal responsibility and their outcome as a citizen (Kumar, 2012). Jake provides yet another instance of how SportHelp coaches influence what it means to be a 'good person':

"With SFG we need to concentrate on the psychological aspect of young people, as well as the social side. It's not just about playing forehand and backhand. If we see they have a strong temperament, we need to try to change that attitude, if you see what I mean. Those who are lazier,

to try and make them more active, to be more organised, to help them improve, to develop stronger social ties to others, and to make them more open to forming communities amongst themselves.”

Jake talks about laziness, and the need to responsabilise young people into becoming “more active”. Once again, this rhetoric is steeped in neoliberal values: the belief that socio-economically disadvantaged young people are inherently lazy and ‘deficient’, thus necessitating their attitude to be changed for them (Harvey, 2007; Soss, Fording and Schram, 2011).

Karl made a further illustration of the extent to which individual responsibility was emphasised:

“He was one of the ones you had to let go. [...] They [the school] did [make an effort], they had social workers, they had support workers... their support workers were asking me for help. I mean..., I’m like...?! I was calling his parents, I was talking to his brother, I was trying everything, contacting his friends... but, he just didn’t want to help himself. And if he doesn’t want to help himself, I can’t help him at all. It’s tough. I tried other stuff to get through, but I just couldn’t. He shut down every door” (Karl).

Though Karl certainly wanted to help this young person, this help was provided on the assumption that this youth would “want to help himself”. Unfortunately, this approach, rooted in individual responsibility, ignores the wider context around young people. It ignores social-structural problems which could have resulted in this youth not knowing what ‘help himself’ means. For Kelly (2011, p. 145), this story is the type of outcome we can expect when “... individual deficits and ‘self-exclusion’ are highlighted and structural inequality de-emphasised”.

Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, beyond the promotion of individual responsibility, also encouraged resilience. Resilience, according to Joseph (2013), is a form of governmentality which places an emphasis on individual responsibility and adaptability. For example,

Vincent often told his players “you guys need to become tougher” and that “until you use your voices, nobody is going to be scared to play against you”. In another occasion, when a player explained she had injured her ankle and could not play, Vincent suggested – in a half-joking, half-serious tone – that she should ignore her doctor’s instructions to rest and should instead get it strapped up by a professional who has “rolled their ankle more than you’ve had hot dinners”.

Jake fostered resilience through encouraging young people to be aggressive. When he chastised Carys for not being sufficiently aggressive, she defended herself by saying she was not an aggressive person. “Sport is aggressive”, Jake reminded her⁶⁷. Similarly, and as I previously mentioned, Jake often became frustrated at Mitch’s “lack of aggression” and “mentality”. He was too sweet, too nice, in contrast to champions, who are “aggressive, they do not give anything to anyone”. Therefore, Jake rationalised Mitch’s lack of resilience as the reason why the youth crumbled when he played.

Karl also encouraged resilience by reminding his team that “those who do not work hard would find themselves on the bench, or off the team sheet”. After a particularly demanding physical fitness session, Karl did not want his players resting their arms on their knees because “you should never show weakness to your opponents, ever”. These coaches’ ‘teachings’ illustrate, through their role as a ‘transformative leader’, how they used sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality to re-shape young people’s personhood. A ‘good’ person is ‘tough’, they “do not give anything to anyone”, and they “never show weakness to their opponents”.

The final value coaches emphasised was discipline:

“I expect them to... give me all, 100% effort. I expect them to be disciplined, in a good way, because it helps. Discipline of timings. Making sure that if I have a training session at 7.30, I’m there at 7.15, 15 minutes before because anything can happen. I hope that applies to coming to school. If

⁶⁷ It’s noteworthy how Jake aims to instil aggression whilst acknowledging that one of his jobs as a coach is to control young people’s “strong temperament” (as he outlined earlier in this theme).

the first class is at 9am, you should be at school at 8.45, so you are not late. It comes from basketball. If I am doing the same thing in sessions, I hope it transitions from basketball to school is the same” (Karl).

“And maybe the only thing that is different in my sessions is the discipline I put on my sessions. They know they are here not to mess around. They have to... proper... leave everything here when they go back to lessons” (Alfred).

Vincent and Jake also took discipline seriously. Vincent valued “precision” and adopted a regimented approach to his basketball sessions. Young people knew when to bounce balls, when to be silent, and when to clap (as a gesture of the team coming together). Similarly, Jake guaranteed a high degree of discipline by ensuring that when he spoke to the young people, they were doing nothing but fully listening to him (rather than roaming or playing with their table tennis bat). These coaches’ focus on discipline is reminiscent of Soss et al.’s (2011) book title, ‘Disciplining the poor’. Soss et al.’s thesis is that in a neoliberal landscape, “the poor exist perennially as subjects who must be governed” (p. 1), and that, in turn, programmes focused on working with socio-economically disadvantaged young people are about managing or ‘containing’ them. In other words, a deficit-reduction approach.

Whilst the coaches prioritised discipline, they were aware that the disciplining systems employed by the schools they worked in were too harsh. They favoured a ‘softer’ approach:

“I think the system in place, to monitor behaviour, it’s a system, like a dictatorship. You don’t do the homework, you have half an hour detention. You don’t listen to me, you have half an hour detention. If you let the pen drop on the floor, you have half an hour detention. You know, it’s... too much. And of course, these kids, after 3 o’clock, they go home. They will free all the frustration, release all the frustration on the streets” (Alfred).

“They [teachers] start off with a harder approach. That’s why I kind of figured... if you talk, you get detention, that’s it, half an hour after school. I don’t think that’s the right way of going about it”
(Karl).

“At the start of every unit, I’ll have a 5 or 10-minute chat with my class for that term, or classes for that term, and I lay out what my expectations are. I’ll say things like, this is how I like the environment to be when I coach, these are the reasons that I like it to be like that [...] If I need to refer back to those expectations, they are already aware of them, they can’t come back to me and say “well, you know, you didn’t tell me that I had to behave like this”, cos kids often try to get one past you like that. And then I can say, “well, look, I said this at the start and you’re not meeting these expectations”. Then they’ll go “yeah, OK coach, my bad” kind of thing” (Vincent).

Whilst these coaches’ approaches are certainly ‘softer’, they were nevertheless built upon a neoliberal assumption that socio-economically disadvantaged young people *need* to be disciplined, within and beyond the realm of sport. Furthermore, the punishment for failing to be disciplined was rooted in a rhetoric steeped in individual responsibility:

“When I had that word with him ‘if you don’t come to school, you can’t play basketball’, they went to school so they could play basketball. They understood the punishment, the other one just decided that if I can’t play, I’m not going to come to school. He just chose that route. He could have learned from that, went to school, and carried on... and would have been accepted back next year. Can’t help them all...” (Karl).

“The ones who continued it deserve to be in the sports hall because they worked hard, knowing we didn’t have the sports hall. They did fitness, whereas the others said “I don’t wanna do fitness,

I don't wanna get any better". Why should they have priority to come back into the sports hall? They have to earn their spot back into the sports hall" (Karl).

Punishments, such as the ones Karl alluded to, generally consisted in game bans. Coaches expected young people to demonstrate resilience to overcome these bans, and 'learn their lesson'. Such bans could be handed out for misbehaviour or falling behind academically:

"Usually, if they get in trouble, they might get a game ban or something. I don't like to discourage them away from the program, I don't like to say 'oh no, you are not going to play basketball for a week' because it is basketball that is motivating them to keep improving and keep, you know, working on their academics. More often than not, I'll say 'well, you've misbehaved twice this week, we've got to have a consequence to this, the consequence is you don't play on the game on Wednesday. But you still train, to prove to me and to prove to your teammates that you are going to be ready to go to the next game'" (Vincent).

What is central to these disciplining approaches is that they are all built upon individual responsibility and a lack of contextual awareness. They take a neoliberal 'deficit reduction' stance (Fraser-Thomas and Côté, 2009) towards young people which assumes youths need to be 'fixed' or 'saved'. Though the coaches certainly employ 'softer' methods than the schools in which they operate, these methods are nonetheless disciplinary. The fact they are softer, in a way, makes them harder to resist, question, or challenge. Thus, by using sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, coaches – as 'transformative leaders' – fulfilled the ambitions of the charity's managers by instilling values of individual responsibility and discipline to 'improve' young people's lives. This process re-shaped adolescents' notions of what constitutes a 'good' person, and re-calibrated how they should govern themselves. During the next theme, 'caring for young people', I illustrate how coaches' success in instilling neoliberal values in young people can be attributed to operating within a non-formal education space.

Caring for young people

Non-formal education spaces, characterised by being informal and less hierarchical (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974), can shape young people's development in ways which formal education struggles to. In SportHelp's case, this was manifested by coaches demonstrating caring behaviours towards the young people in their programmes. Coaches frequently spoke about wanting to support and help the youths under their tutelage, and did so with passion. Through my observations of the basketball and table tennis sessions, and of the times before and after sessions, it was noticeable how much the young people *wanted* to spend time with their coaches. As such, adolescents were more readily inclined to value the lessons their coaches imparted, and thus, prone to internalising individual responsibility and discipline as hallmarks of a 'good' person.

Coaches (again, in line with SportHelp managers' expectations of them) saw themselves as mentors:

"Not only are we seeing them in the mornings, and the afternoons, and the evenings for games and things like that, we see them at lunch time, we see them through the day, we are in and out of their lessons. There is a lot of contact that we have and they have with us, throughout any working day. We can really tap in and mentor them from that perspective" (Vincent).

"They [young people] don't work for me, I work for them. They are the main thing. The most important thing" (Alfred).

"Don't expect me to be only me, or the coaches, to motivate you. You have to motivate myself, too. I need motivation to do the work I do. And my motivation is not my salary, it's what you do every day. So... you motivate me, you are helping me to motivate you" (Alfred).

“Well, when I first came here, it seemed they was dying for a good coach to come here. There had been good coaches, but nothing consistent. They’d be here for a while, and then they are gone, someone else comes in. I explained to them, I am here for the long haul. As long as SportHelp keep me here, I’m going to stay – I’m loyal like that” (Karl).

These quotes capture how the coaches fulfilled one of Noddings' (1984) three requirements of 'care': action. For her, action suggests that the point of caring is simply to care. Though of course these coaches drew a salary for their work, they *wanted* to care for young people. Coaches would often leave their houses at 5.30 or 6am and return around 6 or 7pm, with non-stop days in between, where the fuel for their job was passion and the desire to work with youths. Jake frequently confided in me how he hoped the youths under his tutelage knew he had their best interests at heart.

Another dimension of Noddings' (1984) definition of care ('engrossment') was also fulfilled by coaches. This refers to paying attention and taking an interest in young people's lives:

“But I know a lot of the situations that the only thing you need is somebody to listen to you. Sometimes I don’t have to say anything, I just sit down for twenty minutes, this is happening, and they say OK. Sometimes I ask ‘what do you want me to do?’ ‘I don’t want you to do anything, just listen’. Sometimes I don’t play table tennis” (Alfred).

However, to listen to and take an interest in someone else requires time. This was rarely possible during the coaching sessions, since the goal there was to develop sporting skills and life skills. For coaches to forge meaningful relationships and further demonstrate care, they used the unstructured opportunities available during lunch times:

“It [lunch time] is also the time when a kid comes up to me and tells me something personal, something that is going on in their life, time to catch up... so yeah, that’s what I use lunchtimes for, it is a good time to catch up with them, or if they need to catch up with me” (Karl).

“I always like lunchtimes here, we do our lunchtimes on the outdoor court. [...] It is a way of building a relationship of kids you don’t see that often around the school. I like that time because it is a time that I like to scrimmage, or play with the kids, they ask me to join in, it’s a bit more low key, it is not as serious as when we are training, there is not that much of a coach player hierarchy, we are just playing together, and it’s fun, and we have some banter out there” (Vincent).

The importance of this unstructured space is reflected in how it partially fulfils Nodding’s (1984) third requirement of care: reciprocity. By reciprocity, she refers to what “the cared-for gives to the relation either in direct response to the one-caring or in personal delight or in happy growth” (p. 74). Through loosening the “coach player hierarchy” Vincent spoke of⁶⁸, or having a space to “catch up”, like Karl said, adolescents are presented with the opportunity to genuinely react to how they are being cared-for. This means they do not have to keep their emotions ‘in check’ as much as they would have to in a ‘structured’ space (like a classroom)⁶⁹.

A further way in which the coaches demonstrated how much they cared for the young people on their programmes was by going into youth’s classrooms and helping them with their academics:

“If they don’t want to play, we have other ways in which we can help them. One being that sometimes, in the past, I’ve gone into classrooms, rather than the kid just coming to play

⁶⁸ A core component of non-formal education.

⁶⁹ This capacity to authentically react to how one is cared for is essential to close the ‘caring loop’ and go ‘full circle’. An example of not being to authentically react is having to repress feelings of joy or sadness because it is inappropriate to display them specific contexts or spaces.

basketball. I'll actually go into the student's lesson and sit with them, and mentor them, in an academic lesson" (Vincent).

"For six weeks, I will take them out of, say, a geography class, but I will go into one of their core classes (English, Maths, Science) or wherever they need help in. I take them out of one, and go into one and be like a teaching assistant, but just with him, sitting with him and helping him out. That's my way of giving back to the school, joining them for a class" (Karl).

"Some of them [other coaches] will think 'why am I going to a classroom, I'm a basketball coach'. I think, you know, the kids are benefiting from me going into the class, that's my favourite part of what I do at the moment because I am getting good results" (Karl).

Vincent's and Karl's actions, once again, demonstrate Noddings' (1984) engrossment: they were giving up their time to spend it with a young person. The ramifications of all these caring behaviours – seemingly meeting Noddings' requirement for engrossment, action, and reciprocity – resulted in enhancing young people's sense of belonging and desire to *want* to be a part of the sport programmes:

"They like being here. They see a purpose. This is linear to what the situation that we struggle in our society. [...] They like being here, they see a purpose to being here" (Alfred).

"I suppose in many ways, the kids that come to our SportHelp programs, as out of school hours, they want to be there, they are committed to be there, they enjoy being there, so behaviour is never really an issue" (Vincent).

"Funny enough, the kids that some of teachers think are nightmares, I think are angels when they come to my sessions" (Karl).

I could appreciate this sense of belonging through my observations. When I watched Karl's session, just before it started, young people were laughing, playing around with Karl, and joking. I pointed out to him how animated the atmosphere seemed. "Yeah, everyone loves to play the game" he responded. Similarly, young people were always happy to enter the gym and see Vincent. Jake produced an identical effect on the youths he knew: they felt comfortable with him. However, though coaches aimed to create a sense of belonging, some of their practices did not always achieve this. Instances where competitive drills or an emphasis on performance was fostered were likelier to generate a degree of animosity. This was particularly the case for youths who the coaches felt were neither concentrating nor working hard. Despite the fleeting sense of frustration or alienation engendered, the on-court atmosphere would eventually resume its usual strong 'sense of belonging'. Coaches would attribute the tense moments to the process of developing personhood through life skills attached to sport. Teaching young people this resilience, as per my observations, was one of the ways coaches felt they were providing care for young people.

Therefore, since the coaches appeared to fulfil Noddings' (1984) three requirement for care (engrossment, action, and reciprocity), they created an environment where adolescents felt a sense of belonging. In turn, this meant young people were *willing* to internalise the lessons their coaches taught them. If a coach suggested discipline made you a better person, adolescents were likelier to accept being disciplined was the hallmark of a 'good' person. Thus, operating in a non-formal education space where caring behaviours could be modelled was fundamental for SportHelp coaches to address young people's 'deficits' by promoting individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. Though there were moments of tension which stemmed from an emphasis on competition, they were seen as instances where 'tough love' prevailed by inculcating individual responsibility and resilience.

What are young people's perspectives about the value of SportHelp's youth sport programmes?

The fourth and final sub-question in this chapter encompasses three themes: young people as sport evangelists, sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, and passion, caring coaches, and a sense of belonging. The first two themes illustrate how the young people internalised the rhetoric and messages the managers and coaches promoted. Young people espoused uncritical beliefs about the innate power of sport to improve their lives and how sport, as a vehicle, equipped them with a range of life skills (mainly taken from the SFG framework) they could apply to other parts of their lives. In concert with the managers' goals, and the coaches' actions, sport served as a technology of neoliberal governmentality which re-shaped young people's personhood. Young people said they became 'better people' by internalising the values of individual responsibility and discipline. Such values were internalised because the adolescents *wanted* to learn from their coaches. This desire stemmed from both the coaches and SportHelp programmes meeting youths' needs by fostering passion, caring relationships, and a sense of belonging.

Young people as 'sport evangelists'

Just like the SportHelp managers and coaches, young people uncritically believed in the innate power of sport. When they spoke about the value of sport, they did so in relation to some of the elements of 'Sport For Good', the charity's life skills framework. Also, akin to the managers and the coaches, young people appeared to accept – without question – the benefits sport provided for them. Consequently, sport was seen as a fundamental medium for their development:

"They [teachers] tell you what to do, you have to do it. But with coach... it's like... you're learning, understanding, developing... through basketball. So you're... it's a sense... where you listen to him, but, I doubt, many people would listen to teachers because they simply don't care. I think" (Tia).

Tia's reflections run deeper than just the value of sport ("teachers simply don't care"). This resonated with all the adolescents I interviewed, but it is something I will address in the third theme. Returning to development through the medium of sport, Tia further elaborated on how

"Some of the things you learn in basketball, you take it outside into school life. So, for example, when he [coach Karl] says, um, 'think before you pass', you then go 'well, I think before I speak', because it's the same correlation" (Tia).

The logic that sport-acquired skills are immediately applicable beyond sport resonated with the 'sport evangelism' professed by SportHelp managers and coaches. This logic – which Tia described as "it's the same correlation" – is a common assumption associated to sport-for-development programmes (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom and Skille, 2014; Turnnidge, Côté and Hancock, 2014). The extent to which sport was inextricably wedded to life skills, or education, was further exemplified by Fish:

"I remember one day, my mum tells me this, like, a lot. She says, 'Coach said that basketball gives you...' how am I supposed to explain this? Basketball kind of opens doors, but education is really wide, and you can go through it. If you focus on education more, you have more opportunities, more than basketball. So what he [coach Vincent] is trying to say is focus on your education within basketball. That's why he is trying to say" (Fish).

Whilst he acknowledges the importance of formal education in relation to sport, Fish's concluding remark underlines the significance of "focus[ing] on your education within basketball". This rationale is like Tia's, and once again is based on the supposition that basketball – somehow – can educate adolescents. Mitch, Carys, and H. expanded on what this education looked like and what they learned through sport:

“Um, leadership. Cos, before we played table tennis, we normally do a warm up. Sometimes, Jake⁷⁰, he will choose the leader, to lead it, and, uh, I’ve been chosen a few times to lead it, so it’s helped my leadership” (Mitch).

“Cos I think, as I’ve got better, like, especially when Jake saw me play, a lot of times he’d say ‘you have to be more confident’, so, when I saw him play, when you see him play, he knows what he’s talking about, he knows what he is doing, there is a lot of confidence, like, that came back to me, sort of thing, so that I can [unintelligible], so I know what I was doing. And then I got a bit more confident” (Carys).

“You know, communication is one of the biggest things in basketball, and, when I used to play basketball, I never really talked. So... er... he had to get me in that habit of talking on the court, and obviously, that helped me outside as well. So I talked to other people as well” (H.).

The attributes these young people refer to – confidence, leadership, communication – align with both SportHelp’s SFG framework and with what are generally considered the outcomes youth sport programmes can deliver (Petitpas et al., 2005; Armour et al., 2009). H., like Tia did earlier, makes an inference about the broader applicability of sport-related skills, whilst Carys indicates that Jake “knows what he is talking about, he knows what he is doing”. Though Carys was not afraid to stand up to Jake (she previously dismissed Jake’s encouragement for her to become more aggressive by saying she was not an “aggressive person”), Carys’ assumption that Jake “knows what he is doing” serves to further exemplify how uncritical attitudes to sport spread. This lack of criticality was also displayed by Fish:

“Oh yeah, we had a meeting last week about what our goals are. Some of us said that we want to make it to the finals. And then, overall, as a school team, we said we want to work on our

⁷⁰ Jake was the only coach whose name was never preceded by his title. Whilst young people referred to ‘coach Vincent’ or ‘coach Karl’, those under coach Jake’s tutelage just referred to him as ‘Jake’.

aggressiveness, on defense. [...] Our school is more disciplined, and they respect each other. I'm not saying they don't respect each other – other schools – but they have this aggression. It is difficult to find aggression like that” (Fish).

Is it possible to be respectful and aggressive at the same time? Is ‘aggression’ a positive life skill? These were not points Fish reflected on. Petitpas et al. (2005) argued that “a programme that strives to build confidence and assertiveness in participants may have the unintended effect of promoting aggressive behaviour” (p. 75). The young people did not seem disturbed by the promotion of ‘aggression’; they seemed to accept it as a ‘natural’ aspect of sport:

“If I was looking at [someone not working hard], yeah, I'd get angry, I'd be like, 'time is money, stop messing around, I want to train, instead of running. Running helps, but I want to play basketball'. I remember, sometimes I just shout at people. They understand. If I shouted at someone random, like a friend, maybe, I shouted, they might be like 'hey, why are you shouting at me?' but then, in basketball, when they shout at someone, they understand why I am shouting at them. So, like, yeah” (Fish)⁷¹.

The roots of all these uncritical appraisals and ‘evangelist’ beliefs of sport ran deep, as I noticed during one of my visits to coach Jake’s programme. Before the session commenced, Carys – in a flustered tone – told Jake how her younger brother had been poached from the table tennis squad and put into the rugby team by one of the school’s PE teachers. The teacher’s justification (which was steeped in ‘sport evangelism’) was that “rugby teachers you discipline”. Jake took this as an intolerable grievance, not only because one of his players had been poached, but because the value of table tennis as being *inherently more* than *just* table tennis had been questioned. Jake exclaimed how table tennis obviously teaches

⁷¹ Fish’s use of the sentence “time is money” is coated in neoliberal values. I have unpacked these ideas in the next theme, ‘sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality’.

discipline; like in rugby, you are not allowed to talk back. Carys vigorously nodded in agreement before she echoed Jake's thoughts: "yeah, I know!"

Consequently, young people wedded sport to their development. They saw their education in terms of acquiring life skills like communication or leadership, and they extolled sport as the medium through which these skills – somehow – could be acquired. Their assumptions about the value of sport, like the managers and coaches, appeared to be shaped by an uncritical and deeply entrenched foundation of 'sport evangelism'. Thus, sport was understood as a vehicle that could improve adolescents' lives. Whilst this 'improvement' partly consisted on the acquisition of life skills, in the next theme I will show how adolescents also viewed their 'betterment' in the same deficit-reduction manner the managers and coaches did: via individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. Thus, sport was used as a technology of neoliberal governmentality.

Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality

SportHelp adolescents suggested sport helped them become better people. What they rationalised as 'improved personhood' resonated with the managers and coaches' notions of a 'good citizen': individual responsibility and discipline. Thus, young people acknowledged sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality which re-configured what it meant to be a 'good' human being. As I have outlined throughout the whole of Part two of this chapter, the use of sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality was rooted in a deficit-reduction approach which aimed to 'address' young people's 'deficiencies' by encouraging them to internalise values of individual responsibility and discipline.

SportHelp youths came to understand that it was up to *them* to model personally responsible attitudes if they wanted to succeed in sport and life:

"If I misbehave in school, they're going to take basketball away from me. Does that make sense?

*[...] Yeah, so... now, as a person, I behave *so* well in class, and I'm doing really well in basketball.*

[...] Calling out, arguing with teachers, unnecessary bickering... which is now all gone" (Tia).

"He said that's he's not going to give it [peripatetic sessions – one-to-one sessions] to us straight away, cos, obviously, we have to earn it, so, we have to be dedicated. He gave us a whole speech, that we have to be dedicated and it's worth his time, and the school's time, and, yeah, I started coming at lunch time, breakfast, I don't come to breakfast that often anymore... but I come all the time. And then I got peris [peripatetic sessions]" (Carys).

Whilst Tia's quote resonates with Coakley's (2002) view of youth sport programmes promoting a 'social control dream', Carys' aligns with Coakley's (2002) 'privilege promotion dream'. Common to both 'dreams' is the importance of personal responsibility. In Tia's case, individual responsibility entailed *her* keeping *her* behaviour in check. As Kelly (2011) has argued, neoliberal approaches ignore contextual factors and do not attempt to understand *why* Tia misbehaved in the first place. Instead, Tia internalised the assumption that misbehaviour is a product of her own poor choices, and that it was up to her to control her actions. On the other hand, for Carys, personal responsibility was understood as an equation where hard work correlates with upwards social mobility and access to better opportunities. If Carys wanted to improve at table tennis, it was up to *her* to demonstrate determination and perseverance *before* she was given one-to-one sessions.

Orange offered another example of the extent to which the coaches valued personal responsibility, and what methods they used to instil it in young people:

"When we were clapping up to go into the circle and give our feedback, we were like 'why aren't you coming?' and he was 'coach didn't ask me'. He'll [Coach Vincent] make you feel separated, so

you don't do that thing again. He's trying to make you a better person. He [Coach Vincent] still cares about him, but not as much as other people, like if someone is bad too much" (Orange).

Orange's point about "he's trying to make you a better person" conforms with Foucault's (2008) *homo oeconomicus*: an entrepreneur of the self who learns that to feel included, one should *first* do something *worthy* of inclusion (just like Carys', above, had to demonstrate she was worthy of receiving one-to-one sessions). This rhetoric of individual responsibility was particularly espoused by Fish:

"One thing, you know, this might be a bit too serious, this generation, they are kind of lazy. Really lazy. Some people think life is going to be easy, but it is not as easy as it seems. You should take as many opportunities as you have in life. Take a lot" (Fish).

His analysis of his contemporaries as 'lazy' reflects deeply entrenched neoliberal values, and assumes that people do not take opportunities because they either do not work hard or fail to maximise what they can do with their supposed 'freedom' (Peck and Tickell, 2007). The extent to which sport was used as a technology of neoliberal governmentality was particularly noticeable throughout my observations. Coaches frequently equated individual responsibility to 'good' personhood; an association which the young people gradually internalised.

Jake frequently spoke about individual responsibility, and during one of my visits, told me how he reacted to Carys' recent "moody spell" by giving her "an ultimatum". Jake explained to her that in life, you always have a boss and two choices: either accept the boss's orders, or change boss. Apparently, this conversation sparked Carys into a spell of top form and behaviour. In another instance, whilst I waited in the hallway with Jake, Gustav (a young boy with a history of poor social skills) approached Jake to request one-to-one table tennis sessions. When Jake responded he was too busy that week, Gustav simply turned around and walked away. Jake erupted (in front of other young people) and exclaimed that, despite

attempting to work with Gustav, *his* attitude was not progressing and thus he might be dropped from the programme.

Though the coaches were overt about the value of individual responsibility and why young people should internalise it, the young people detected some of the subtler ways individual responsibility was married to ‘good citizenship’:

“I think that’s the question... about, like, does he [Coach Vincent] persuade people to come practice? That’s why I said, he avoids trouble. If you wanna go training, go training and stay committed. He likes committed people. Some people are on and off. You can’t really be on and off. You have to stick to it or let go” (Fish).

“A lot of, you know, the cool kids, they used to play basketball. They encouraged this guy to come along, with coach. He had, like this guy, was really rude. He’d always get detentions. He was unorganized. He was undisciplined. Coach [Vincent] tried to work with him. Occasionally, he will try to bring in these kinds of people. The second it starts to become an actual distraction to us, it’s like the referral system in school. If someone starts to become too much of a distraction in school, like, he won’t like, concentrate on them. He won’t say ‘come to training’. If I don’t come to training, he’ll ask me, cos he cares when you come training. If I don’t have excuse, he’ll get angry at me, cos he cares. The second that person stopped trying themselves... you can’t force them to try” (Orange).

Orange’s and Fish’s analyses once again highlight how the onus of responsibility to improve as people is on the adolescents. Through their youth sport programmes, they realised that a ‘bad’ person is someone who does not address their ‘deficits’ – these are individuals whose behaviour “starts to become too much of a distraction”. Likewise, if someone is “on and off” or “stopped trying themselves”, they have failed to display individual responsibility. By ‘individualising the social’ (Jamrozik, 2009), there is a danger

of replicating social exclusion rather than fostering inclusion (Kelly, 2011; Winlow and Hall, 2013). Those adolescents who did not displaying individual responsibility did not merit inclusion in SportHelp's youth sports programme. However, the neoliberal technology of sport did not only emphasise responsabilisation as the route to 'good' personhood; there was a focus on discipline too. Young people internalised and extolled the value of discipline:

"If coach did not have this much discipline, I don't think I'd be here right now. I think I'd be really bad. And not focused at school, because coach is really disciplined. He wants us to be really disciplined, or else..." (Fish).

"Without him, I think, there wouldn't be any structure, there wouldn't be anything... guys could think they could do whatever they want, and there wouldn't be any discipline. We'd just have a coach we can walk all over. We don't want that" (Tia).

Fish and Tia rationalised 'discipline' as the panacea to what would otherwise be their 'deficits'. They welcomed discipline as something they 'needed'. When I probed Fish and Orange further to understand what they meant by 'discipline', they suggested the following:

Fish: *We know what's wrong. We learn from our mistakes. We listen to our teachers, and our coach. What is discipline...*

Orange: *Acting in an orderly fashion. Not being rude. Just the small things.*

Fish: *Respect.*

Orange: *Emphasis on the small things, the basics. Like, what's the school values, we have like the 6 values. It's kind of like that. Concentrating on those small things. Be organized. Stuff like that. I don't know, it's just ingrained in what coach talks about all the time. Discipline in training.*

Orange's and Fish's view of discipline is summarised by Hodgson (2016, p. 11): "basic rules, etiquettes, and habits of mind concerned with self-improvement and responsibility". Consequently, SportHelp participants – in line with the neoliberal thrust for disadvantaged young people to learn to govern themselves through becoming docile and controlled (Phoenix and Kelly, 2013; Franzen, 2015) – put a strong emphasis on the association between discipline and good citizenship:

"In year 8, I realized that discipline is kind of a big thing, and, I don't know... it shows you are a good person. You know what is good, and what is bad" (Fish).

The value of discipline and individual responsibility appeared to be deeply entrenched in young people's minds, indicating the 'effectiveness' of sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality. The extent of this 'effectiveness' is demonstrated by Orange:

"I mean, from training I've learnt to keep myself calm. When coach shouts at me, like, if I wasn't disciplined, I'd probably shout back. I knew someone that did" (Orange).

His quote suggests that a 'good person' is someone who remains calm and docile *when they are shouted at*. What remains unquestioned is the context: why was his coach shouting at him, and is it acceptable for his coach to do so? This illustrates why neoliberal forms of governing oneself are blinkered: the structure or situation around a person is taken for granted whilst change can only be engendered by how one *chooses* to react to their environment.

Furthermore, given young people saw value in discipline, it was an attribute they saw as 'positive' and therefore necessary to instil in others. This became apparent during the conversations I frequently held with Amelia, a 13-year-old girl with a passion for basketball who often watched Coach Vincent's sessions. Amelia repeatedly explained how basketball teaches you discipline, and how that meant her not wanting to disappoint her coach. As such, she relished having a coach who was strict and enforced

punishments (such as a 10-push-up penalty for being late)⁷². As team captain, she felt it was necessary to “discipline” (her word) the more inexperienced players.

To summarise, sport – as a technology of neoliberal governmentality – re-shaped young people’s notions of personhood in accordance with individual responsibility and discipline. Since young people uncritically assumed sport improved their lives by addressing their ‘deficits’, adolescents willingly internalised individual responsibility and discipline as further steps towards ‘improvement’. What made this internalisation possible, as I will illustrate in the next theme, was the passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging which SportHelp programmes could generate by operating in the realm of non-formal education.

Passion, caring coaches, and a sense of belonging

Non-formal education, with its reduced emphasis on hierarchy and formality, twinned with the focus on developing meaningful human relationships, met a range of young people’s needs that formal education (school) struggled to address. Young people demonstrated passion for their sport (they *wanted* to attend SportHelp sessions), eulogized their coaches and developed warm relationships with them, and, as a result, felt a sense of belonging within SportHelp programmes. As such, adolescents wanted to be part of SportHelp sessions and they wanted to learn from their coaches. This is how sport, as a technology of neoliberal governmentality promoting individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills, was readily internalised by young people.

⁷² When I used to coach the University of Bath’s women’s basketball team, I also had many players who *wanted* me to punish them for not working hard. Though I am not suggesting this is a gendered phenomenon, and the evidence is anecdotal, it does illustrate how deeply embedded – and bizarre – these beliefs can be.

Passion

The adolescents I interviewed clearly loved their sport, even if they struggled to articulate why they liked it:

“I was just playing it for fun. I like trying different sports. I’ve played tennis, and badminton... I love sports. And basketball, it seemed really different. I don’t know, I just felt it in me. It was a lot of fun. The good thing about basketball is that you get rivals. I have a lot of rivals, and friends, good friends as well” (Fish).

“It’s because since I started I’ve enjoyed it [table tennis] a lot, like, I decided to put most of my time into this, and um, cos, I just... enjoy it” (Mitch).

“Um... I guess football... er... it was just too boring for me. I didn’t like the sport that much. I liked... at first, but I played it so much that it got too boring. So... and then when I found basketball, you know, it’s a different story, I don’t get bored with it at all, I’ve played two years straight, and it doesn’t get boring” (H.).

Fish, Mitch, and H. described the love for their sports in terms of what Vallerand et al. (2003) identify as ‘harmonious passion’. Harmonious passion arises from individuals voluntarily engaging in an activity of their choice, and stands in contrast to ‘obsessive passion’ (which is demarked by the pursuit of an activity based on some form of pressure, such as seeking social acceptance). The extent to which these sports made these youth’s lives ‘worth living’ was further captured by Orange and Tia:

“Yeah, like no one has passion and stuff for the game, and stuff, you know what I mean? Like there’s people... we wake up at 6, and, we do something productive, instead, I have some friends who will wake up at 6 to do their make up for two hours before school. When they ask me what’s

the point of going training, I ask them what's the point of doing make up for two hours? It's just a waste" (Orange).

"That's the only reason. If they [other young people] don't love it, they wouldn't continue to play, and they wouldn't come to morning trainings, 7:30 to 8:30... it's ridiculous but... if you don't like the sport, then you won't do it. You won't really care about it. Putting your hours, your time, into something you don't really like..." (Tia).

Though some of the reasons Fish and Orange articulated (the desire for competition and the need to be 'productive') highlight how sport is a fertile ground for the reproduction of neoliberal values (Coakley, 2011A), all the young people indicated that playing their sport gave them joy. As such, the development of these young people's 'harmonious passion' stemmed from the fulfilment of a three step process (Vallerand, 2008): choice over what sport to play, awarding a substantial amount of subjective value to the sport, and finally internalising the activity as something youths *want* to do, instead of *have* to do. This speaks to how 'harmonious passion' emerges from the fulfilment of three basic human needs: autonomy, competence, and relationships⁷³ (Deci and Ryan, 2008).

During one of my observations of Jake's sessions with Carys and Mitch, I stayed for an extra hour to watch Jake's afterschool table tennis session. It featured approximately twelve tables and twenty-four young people (aged 11-16). Jake was the lone adult in the room, and all he did was sit next to the entrance, and tick young people's names off a list. When I asked him if he was going to do any coaching, he replied that it was impossible: there were too many kids. He just let them get on with it. And that's exactly what the young people did. They played table tennis. Some of the younger ones would mess around for a few minutes, but without being prompted, would make their way back to the table. No one misbehaved or had to be 'disciplined'. This showed the extent to which young people *wanted* to play a game they *loved*.

⁷³ I will say more about relationships later in this theme.

However, passion for a sport in itself is insufficient for young people to internalise the values of individual responsibility and discipline the coaches promoted⁷⁴. In addition to passion, SportHelp's adolescents had their needs for meaningful human relationships addressed.

Caring relationships

By *wanting* to play a sport, and associating their coach to that sport, young people were more willing to internalise their coaches' teachings. In the same way that the coaches developed meaningful caring relationships with adolescents, the young people also forged caring relationships with coaches. Adolescents overwhelmingly felt their coaches cared for them; they looked up to the coaches and considered them pivotal figures who were responsible for shaping the type of people they were turning into:

"Some things I mainly learned from him [Coach Karl] is to just humble myself, I should always take school seriously, um, also, work hard in basketball, work smart... and just be... just be a... you know, a good man" (H.)

"A mentor and a friend at the same time. He guides me a lot. If it wasn't for him... I mean... I wouldn't be disciplined. It reflects to your life, as well, the things coach teaches you. He teaches you to respect your parents, value your education..." (Orange).

"Coach is like a mentor to me. You know, sometimes you can tell if someone wants you to succeed in life. I can tell coach wants me to succeed" (Fish).

H.'s, Orange's, and Fish's reflections indicate how the lessons they learned from their coaches contributed to becoming better people. It is illustrative of how adolescents internalised individual

⁷⁴ In the same way that a students' love for a subject can be diminished by having a teacher they dislike.

responsibility, discipline, and life skills; youths equated 'being cared-for' with being taught how to govern themselves and their personhood through hard work, discipline, and respect. One of the reasons young people felt cared-for is captured by Fish's comment "I can tell coach wants me to succeed". This is in line with the first of Noddings' (1984) three tenets of 'care': engrossment. The young people knew that their coaches took an interest in them and their lives. The second tenet, action (whereby the carer's motives are to neither seek reward or commendation for their provision of care), arose in my conversations with Orange and Carys:

"The difference between teachers and coach... the difference between teachers and coach is that teachers, even when they try to get on a level with you, have that connection, it is never going to be the same as coach. Coach... he will do things out of his own time. Teachers are always getting paid. They are here, they are getting paid. When they do extra break duties, they are getting more money. For them, it is all about the money. Coach, he actually cares about you. As a person" (Orange).

"I used to think... some people in my class are rude to teachers, and teachers would be like 'I spent a lot of time preparing to teach you', and I would always think 'well you are getting paid to be here, that's the only reason you're kind of here'. And then, I kind of used to think that about [coach] Jake, 'it's your job, you need to come here to get paid', and then, and then, when I got invited to like tournament, I started to be like 'he didn't have to be here, he could be with his son', or, especially, I think it was the communion of his cousin, and instead of being there, he came to the tournament with us, cos it was quite important, and then... it put a lot of respect for Jake. He put us first" (Carys).

The third and final of Noddings' tenets (1984), reciprocity, entails the cared-for genuinely responding to the actions of the person who cares for them. These reactions came in the form of young

people re-shaping their personhood – they *wanted* to become ‘better’ people by ‘following’ their coach’s teachings. However, adolescents’ needs for relationships were met with a condition. Young people knew that their coaches would care for them *if* they demonstrated individual responsibility, made the right choices by internalising life skills, and were disciplined. Recall how Jake wanted to terminate Gustav’s participation in the table tennis programme *because* Gustav’s character development was not progressing, or how Orange and Fish perceived Vincent would avoid bringing in young people who seemed ‘too problematic’ or who were not demonstrating positive attitude changes. Therefore, this conditionality of care (where the extent coaches provided care for young people depended on the extent to which young people internalised individual responsibility and discipline) deviates from Noddings’ (1984) conceptualisation of care. This is because Noddings’ conceptualisation of care is *unconditional*, whilst the coaches’ was *conditional*:

“Fish here, coach really likes him, because he’s always organised, he’s a good kid, most of the time, and he might have an off day once or twice. But there are certain kids who are, like, part of the team... they don’t really learn from their mistakes, they’ll just keep doing the same thing over and over, and that’s why he has a closer relationship to me and Fish to some other people” (Orange).

Nevertheless, those youths who re-shaped their personhood to align with individual responsibility and discipline enjoyed having their needs for caring relationships met. By operating within the framework of non-formal education, young people highlighted they felt their coaches cared for them more than their teachers, who were bound by the hierarchical structure of formal education:

“Some teachers, they just don’t care as much. Some are ‘you respect me, I teach you’ sort of thing. It wasn’t ‘you respect me, I respect you’, it was ‘respect me, I teach you. That’s it’” (Carys).

Ioannis: *Earlier you mentioned that coach was strict.*

Tia: *Yeah but, it's like a fun kind of strict.*

Ioannis: *What do you mean by that?*

Tia: *If you do something wrong, then, he'll come down on you like... he'll just come down on you. But, if you haven't done anything wrong, then he has no reason to be... like strict, he'll be fun, he'll bring out his bubbly side...*

Ioannis: *And when you mean that the teachers are strict, they don't have that bubbly side?*

Tia: *No. Not at all. (Tia).*

"Um... with some teachers, there's not really a difference, um, yeah, because I can talk to Coach Karl, and I can talk to the teachers if I need anything, or I need some help, um... but then Coach Karl is a bit more different than others, because, um, he just... he talks about things like, outside of school as well, so... if I have any problems outside of school, I can go talk to him about it, he'll help... you know, I can, er, I can just talk to him... I'm more comfortable talking to coach than I am talking to teachers" (H.).

The different perceptions towards teachers and coaches was not rooted in what the SportHelp managers believed was an inherent dissimilarity between the two roles (as they advanced in the earlier theme 'coaches as transformative leaders'). What mattered to the young people is how much they *felt* cared-for, and whilst most teachers struggled to offer Noddings' (1984) engrossment, action, and reciprocity (given the constraints of formal education), this was not the case for all of them. Contrarily, coaches seemed capable of offering all three elements, albeit for those young people *who deserved it by modelling personally responsible behaviours*. Thus, whilst young people were reticent to learn from their teachers, they were willing to internalise values espoused by their coaches.

A final point of interest in relation to care is how the young people situated their coach (in relation to their parents) as a pivotal figure in their lives:

“Erm, and, a part from my mom, to me he actually comes above my dad. He’s been there more for me than my actual dad has been. He’s like a father figure to me, if you know what I mean. I’d put him on par with my parents” (Orange).

“Yeah... well, obviously parents a bit higher, but yeah, Jake always says ‘you’re my daughter, you are all my children’, and he really helps you in life, like, he’ll help you quite a lot, especially, I did bad in school, he said ‘stop. If you continue doing that you won’t be doing table tennis’. It’s almost like... he’s almost like a third parent, in a way, like my uncle or something, cos he’s just really helpful” (Carys).

“Just below my parents. Mmmhhmmm. He’s changed my life. If I’m being honest with you... I think I said this already. If it wasn’t for him, I don’t know where I’d be. I have no clue where I’d be” (Fish).

These comments suggest the young people viewed their coaches as a form of pseudo-attachment figure. By ‘pseudo-attachment’ figure, I mean the coach seemed capable of attending to some of the aspects of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). These include providing support and a safe base (“he’s been there more for me than my actual dad” – Orange), as well as influencing adolescents’ internal working models⁷⁵ (which indicate what a young person can expect from the world – those who are ‘disciplined’ and demonstrate individual responsibility are likely to be cared-for). Though the idea of coaches being able to emulate some aspects of attachment figures has been explored (Felton and Jowett, 2013), I am cautious not to erroneously assume coaches are the same (or are very near to) parents:

⁷⁵ (Bowlby, 1973, cited in Dykas & Cassidy, 2011)

“You can’t really say your coach and your parents are similar, you can’t say they’re on the same level, cos that’s ridiculous! I don’t love coach! Really, I don’t love coach the way I love my parents! Cos... that’s like... and internal thing. I think you look up to them for different reasons. You look up to your parents, so you can become like them. I want to become like my parents. Coach, you look up to him, and... we want to be able to do what he can do, cos he can do some many things...”
(Tia).

What is apparent is that young people’s needs for meaningful relationships were fulfilled by SportHelp coaches. Twinned with passion for a sport, experiencing these caring relationships meant adolescents *wanted* to play a sport *in the company of* their coach. As such, there was a willingness to internalise the values espoused by coaches through the use of sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality. However, there was a further set of needs SportHelp programmes addressed: a sense of belonging.

Sense of belonging

A sense of belonging was shaped by environmental factors which motivated adolescents to keep returning to SportHelp sessions:

“One thing is... being a part of something big, also playing with my friends, cos, they enjoy it as well as me. So I’m not the only one in my year who loves playing table tennis, those things” (Mitch).

“And, like, I have made close friends. They are like brothers to me now. We are in contact. We are really close. The team I was with in the final, they posted a picture, it kind of touched my heart, because they are really close to me” (Fish).

“Yeah, he [Coach Vincent] says that there’s kind of like, well, he doesn’t say this exactly, but he says there’s a kind of brotherhood, there’s a friendship being part of something...” (Orange).

“Coach makes us a family, but in class you’re not a family, you’re just different students trying to get the best grade possible, whereas... with basketball... you’re trained to compete with each other, but... you’re competing in a friendly atmosphere. Whereas in school, it’s not really friendly, it’s just... like... it’s almost like you have to be by yourself, you have to be individual. But here... you can be dependent on the team, and overall... it’s similar in that you have to learn to be by yourself, and learn to be competitive, and learn to be able to do things on your own, that’s the only thing that’s similar, the difference is that they are much stricter than coach. Coach is more fun, more relaxed, the atmosphere is a lot... bubbly” (Tia).

The motivation young people described here can be understood through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Self-Determination Theory operates hand-in-hand with passion (Vallerand et al., 2003) and care (Noddings, 1984), and suggests that the young people achieved the highest level of motivation (being ‘intrinsically motivated’, where the purpose of an activity is to do the activity itself) because three basic needs were met. This trio was autonomy (choice over what sport they played), competence (feeling they were capable of playing the sport), and relatedness (meaningful human relationships). Thus, young people *wanted* to play their sport, enjoyed developing relationships with their coaches, and *wanted* to attend SportHelp sessions as spaces where they felt a sense of belonging.

Despite the passion and sense of belonging exhibited by the young people I interviewed, their views were not representative of every young person. Not every session fostered passion and a strong sense of belonging; some could produce the opposite effect. Vincent’s sessions were marked by seriousness, which was meant to ensure high concentration levels. In the instances where adolescents

who rarely attended joined a session, their (comparatively) inferior tactical and technical knowledge was treated as a hindrance⁷⁶. Therefore, Vincent's sessions were for those whose passion and motivation were wedded to competitive and structured basketball; it was not tailored to those who wanted a more informal space to play.

Coach Jake's and Coach Karl's sessions, in comparison to Coach Vincent's, had a livelier atmosphere but were still underscored by seriousness. As previously discussed, Jake disliked Carys or Mitch smiling or laughing because it suggested a lack of aggressiveness. Despite this, Jake would from time to time tell jokes which, because his type of humour, Carys and Mitch would indulge rather than enjoy. Karl's sessions were the liveliest, and featured a great deal more smiles and laughing than in Vincent's or Jake's. However, Karl, like the other two coaches, also stressed the importance of hard work and taking basketball seriously.

In sum, the non-formal education nature of SportHelp programmes led to a range of young people's needs being met. The combination of passion, caring relationships, and a sense of belonging illustrate *why* SportHelp and its coaches could effectively harness the power of sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality to re-shape adolescents' notions of personhood. Young people were *willing* to internalise individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills as the traits of a 'good' human being because their coaches espoused such values. Since neither passion, care, nor a sense of belonging were generally present within the formal education classrooms of the young people, these youths were reticent to learn from their teachers.

⁷⁶ Remember Vincent's session I described earlier in the chapter, where a young person with technically inferior basketball skills was made to feel unwelcome. His diminished ability was a hindrance to everyone else who was trying to complete a competitive drill.

End of chapter summary

In this chapter I presented 11 themes which served to answer my research question ‘how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?’ By organising my data in two parts, each dealing with the first and second half of my research question, I showed how the causal mechanism of neoliberal governmentality *caused* the events my participants described in interviews, and which I observed ethnographically. At the macro-level, the technologies of New Public Management and responsibilisation re-sculpted SportHelp into a ‘quasi-market’. One of the key outcomes of this re-configuration was the adoption of a deficit-reduction approach towards supporting socio-economically disadvantaged young people.

This deficit-reduction approach manifested itself at the micro-level when I examined SportHelp’s youth sport programmes through the lenses of managers, coaches, and young people. Sport was treated as a panacea which could inherently address young people’s ‘deficits’ and improve their lives. Since this ‘improvement’ consisted in ‘plugging the gaps’ of young people’s personhood via the internalisation of individual responsibility, discipline and life skills, sport was deployed as a technology of neoliberal governmentality. However, what made adolescents susceptible to internalise the values of this technology was that SportHelp operated in the realm of non-formal education. Since coaches had room to meet a range of young people’s needs, youths developed a passion for their sport, meaningful and caring relationships with their coaches, and acquired a sense of belonging. These three aspects – which were rarely (if at all) instilled in their formal education classrooms – resulted in SportHelp’s young people *wanting* to internalise the lessons their coaches imparted. This is how socio-economically disadvantaged young people willingly re-shaped their personhood to align with neoliberal forms of citizenship.

Discussion

Introduction

My purpose in this chapter is to draw together the data in the Results chapter and analyse it to make sense of the 'bigger picture'. Considering my research sought to answer the question 'how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?', the current chapter will address the different ways neoliberal governmentality shapes SportHelp and its programmes. Through the technologies of New Public Management and responsabilisation, SportHelp re-configured itself into a 'quasi-market' that could effectively compete for funds and resources within the neoliberal market paradigm. This re-shaping into a 'quasi-market' led SportHelp to take a 'deficit-reduction' approach towards helping socio-economically disadvantaged young people. Rooted in a neoliberal conceptualisation of young people being 'problematic' because they are poor, SportHelp relied on sport as a technology of governmentality that could 'fix' these 'problematic' adolescents.

Given the synergies between neoliberalism and sport, the charity generally succeeded in using sport to 'improve' youths' lives. However, 'improvement' was synonymous with 'fixing', meaning that adolescents' personhood was re-shaped to align with neoliberal notions of citizenship by internalising individual responsibility, discipline, and specific life skills. In turn, this internalisation of values through the neoliberal technology of sport was expedited because SportHelp operates in the realm of non-formal education. Within such a space, coaches had the time and capacity to foster passion, caring relationships, and a sense of belonging in young people. As such, young people *wanted* to learn from their coaches, and *wanted* to internalise what they perceived as 'good' teachings regarding individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills, as the hallmarks of a 'good' person.

This chapter is split into five sections. First, I look at how becoming a ‘quasi-market’ encouraged SportHelp to take a deficit-reduction approach towards helping young people. Secondly, I address what implementing this deficit-reduction approach entailed, and afterwards, I unpack why sport served as an effective technology of neoliberal governmentality to implement a deficit-reduction approach. Fourthly, I illustrate how the non-formal education space SportHelp operated in served as a suitable platform to internalise neoliberal values. Lastly, I draw these four sections together to look at the ‘bigger picture’.

Becoming a ‘quasi-market’: Adopting a deficit-reduction approach

As a charity operating in the UK’s voluntary sector, SportHelp had to re-configure itself into a ‘quasi-market’ to maximise its chances of survival. Considering the UK operates according to the neoliberal equation of “free market = competition = best value for money” (Lorenz, 2012, p. 601), ‘survival’ for SportHelp entails demonstrating their programmes constitute ‘best value for money’. To present their credentials to the free market, the charity re-shaped itself into an enterprise capable of ‘fighting’ for resources (contracts and funds) in a hyper-competitive landscape (Davies, 2011). Understanding that the neoliberal ‘jungle law’ (Peck and Tickell, 1994; Peck and Tickell, 2012) produces “funded sheep, or unfunded goats” (Harris, Mori and Collins, 2009, p. 420), SportHelp re-configured itself according to the technologies of New Public Management and responsabilisation. Embracing neoliberal governmentality has helped the charity flourish into the organisation they are today, as Natalie (a long-standing trustee) noted: “when you talk to funders, the feedback to us is that they are very impressed with what we are doing”. However, as I will illustrate in this section, the re-configuration into a ‘quasi-market’ also re-shaped the charity’s attitude towards socio-economically disadvantaged young people. By envisaging them as ‘deficient’ and in need of personal development (Draper and Coalter, 2016), SportHelp took a deficit-reduction approach towards supporting youths. In what follows, I first examine how the technologies of New Public Management and responsabilisation re-shaped SportHelp into a ‘quasi-market’

which adopted a deficit-reduction approach. Then, I look at the implications of SportHelp becoming a 'quasi-market'.

New Public Management, responsabilisation, and a deficit-reduction approach

How did embracing the technologies of New Public Management (NPM) and responsabilisation result in the charity taking a deficit-reduction approach? Though SportHelp were always clear about what their goal was ("to help young people, mainly in disadvantaged communities, achieve their potential using sport as the medium" – Beatrice); Dane repeatedly highlighted how "the balance of power between us and the funder is very much in their favour". In other words, whilst SportHelp were clear about what their purpose was, they needed a way of *framing* and *communicating* that goal in a manner which pandered to a range of prospective donors:

"Decision-makers in governments, NGOs, and corporate social responsibility departments have favoured programs with underlying evaluative and corrective agendas built into the selection, delivery, and implementation processes [of youth sport programmes]" (Coakley, 2016, p. 26).

By 'corrective agendas', Coakley refers to programmes which can 'fix' disadvantaged young people's 'deficiencies'. These 'deficiencies' stem from a neoliberal assumption whereby social problems are reduced to individual problems (Jamrozik, 2009). Considering 'winners' – conceptualised by the free market paradigm as those with access to substantial financial resources – are considered to have 'made it' in life, the implication is that adolescents from low socio-economic backgrounds – 'losers', given they are financially poor – need to be 'fixed' to become 'winners' (McInerney and Smyth, 2015). Thus, SportHelp needed to frame the value of their youth sport programmes in terms of a deficit-reduction approach funders could understand and be willing to fund. But pandering to funders required more than SportHelp formulating the goal of their programmes in terms of a 'corrective agenda'; it required re-

shaping how the charity aimed to meet their goals and how it monitored and reported its practices. This is where the technologies of NPM and responsabilisation played their part.

Considering how all public sector services in a neoliberal landscape need to be re-configured into 'quasi-markets' (Harvey, 2005), SportHelp needed to do the same to maximise its chances of survival. Influenced by the technologies of NPM and responsabilisation, the charity became a 'quasi-market' with a 'corrective agenda' by realising they needed to show personal responsibility: "you need to start generating your own results, and own your results" (Dane). For SportHelp, this meant embarking on a four-year organisational shift which culminated in the development of a bespoke framework, 'Sport For Good'. Underpinned by twelve 'life skills' (such as teamwork, communication, and determination), SFG became the charity's 'business strategy'. By viewing and discussing SFG in terms of a 'business strategy', SportHelp conformed to the NPM practice of 'businessification' (Bruce and Chew, 2011) – conceptualising the charity in the language of private, for-profit businesses. By using this entrepreneurial language – attuned to the free market paradigm – SportHelp could better demonstrate their 'value' considering SFG, in the first instance,

"builds an organisational vocabulary. Then it grows and builds and organisational philosophy, and then it grows and builds and organisational currency, whereby we can almost buy, or sell, or trade, in SFG, almost like you would do on the stock market, because it has that almost explicit, tangible, existence" (Dane).

For SFG to have a 'tangible existence' in the eyes of funders or donors, the framework had to generate outcomes that could be monitored and evaluated. Adhering to the NPM-practice of quantification (Bevir, Rhodes and Weller, 2003; Bovaird and Loffler, 2009), SportHelp designed SFG so that each life skill (such as teamwork or determination) was measurable on a ten-point scale. This enabled the charity to report young people's improvements numerically:

“I know I’ve had some young people on my programme, where I first met them, they were maybe at a level 2 in terms of their communication [...] and what they’ve learned in terms of consequences from being on the programme, now they are at a level 6!” (Lisa)

In addition to sculpting *how* the SFG framework outputs were reported, NPM influenced the *contents* of the framework. Combined with funders seeking ‘corrective agendas’, donors are also keen to fund values which are considered important in neoliberal society. Rudd (2005) refers to these values as ‘social values’ encompassing teamwork, loyalty, and self-sacrifice, alongside self-confidence (Coakley, 2016) and resilience (Joseph, 2013). SFG’s life skills also pander to corporate funders and their Corporate Social Responsibility budgets: “it is connected a bit to what that corporate does, and a lot of corporate funding is connected to employability and skills training” (Emily). Therefore, the SFG strategy was a collection of life-skills which, if mastered, meant a young person had ‘fixed’ their ‘deficiencies’ and developed into a ‘good’ person. Emily indicated as much by describing that SportHelp’s “approach is intervention before they [socio-economically disadvantaged young people] become NEETs⁷⁷”. This rhetoric is underscored by the technology of responsibilisation, whereby a correlation is drawn between a young person demonstrating individual responsibility and them ‘improving themselves’ (Kumar, 2012) by scoring higher marks on the framework’s life skills.

Beyond developing the SFG framework, SportHelp embraced a further NPM practice to become a ‘quasi-market’: professionalisation. In contrast with the charity’s early days – “it was more seat-of-the-pants, it was quite opportunistic” (Natalie) – there was an emphasis on bureaucratic divisions of labour and the adoption of practices attuned to businesses (Fyfe, Timbrell and Smith, 2006). Trustees oversaw strategy (“I’ve become much more what a trustee should be, which is much more involved with oversight, [...] more exec, able to focus more on strategy” – Natalie) whilst coaches operated on the ‘front lines’

⁷⁷ Not in Education, Employment, or Training.

("the coalface" – Beatrice) delivering SFG. This process of professionalisation, whilst appealing in the eyes of funders, is associated with developing "more passive forms of citizenship, where service users are consumers of welfare delivered by a professionalised workforce of paid staff" (Fyfe, Timbrell and Smith, 2006, p. 637). This 'passive form of citizenship' resonates with a deficit-reduction approach, where the goal is to 'fix' the assumed 'deficits' in a young person's life.

The final step SportHelp took in its re-configuration into an enterprise was demonstrating personal responsibility and accountability through the technology of responsabilisation. Through the constant implementation of safeguarding procedures and policies, SportHelp wanted their "coaches and participants to be safe and deliver great programmes" (Beatrice). Conceiving increasing levels of bureaucracy as 'necessary' for the implementation of 'good' programmes rooted in the SFG framework is indicative of the neoliberal need to contain and minimise risk (Ruch, 2012). It demonstrates to prospective funders that SportHelp 'takes care of itself' by ensuring the charity operates in a 'controlled' environment demarcated by adhering to SportHelp's 'essential operating standards' (as Beatrice described them). By attempting to manage risks, the charity inherently becomes less concerned with *how* they meet young people's needs and instead become focused on making sure they are following procedures (Rogowski, 2014; Rogowski, 2015). This is precisely what Gavin, SportHelp's founder and Chief Executive Officer, frequently exclaims to Natalie: "I just can't bear these procedures, I just want to be out there working with the children and not writing bloody procedures".

In summary, I have outlined how the neoliberal technologies of New Public Management and responsabilisation shaped SportHelp. These technologies governed the charity 'at a distance' by making SportHelp realise that to survive in a neoliberal hyper-competitive landscape, it needed to re-sculpt itself into a 'quasi-market'. This meant adopting an ethos towards supporting young people that could pander to funders: a 'corrective agenda', deficit-reduction approach. Unto this end, SportHelp became more professionalised, created a bespoke measurement-based framework (SFG) to monitor and report their

outcomes, and modelled individual responsibility by implementing a range of safeguarding policies designed to minimise risk. As a result of this process, the deficit-reduction focused 'quasi market' SportHelp was in a position to approach schools and say

"For an investment of Y, this coach has a massive impact on your kids, particularly those that can be very challenging" (Beatrice).

Consequently, SportHelp was flourishing and expanding. Not only was it operating in more schools, it was also attracting and securing funding from the government. In short, by re-shaping itself according to the neoliberal technologies of New Public Management and responsabilisation, SportHelp was maximising its chances of survival. But what are the implications of SportHelp becoming a 'quasi-market'?

The implications of SportHelp becoming a 'quasi-market'

Through my data and analysis in the previous section, I illustrated how neoliberal governmentality, in practice, influenced the change and continuity of SportHelp. New Public management and responsabilisation, operating 'at a distance', indirectly and without coercion (Peck and Tickell, 2007; Rose, 2000), achieved precisely what technologies of neoliberal governmentality are designed to do. They provide

"a mentality of government, a conception of how authorities should use their power in order to improve national well-being, the ends they should seek, the evils they should avoid, the means they should use, and, crucially, the nature of the persons upon whom they must act" (Rose, 1996, p. 153).

The message SportHelp received was they should act upon 'deficient' individuals (socio-economically disadvantaged young people) by 'fixing' their 'deficits', using a framework which both

promotes life skills valued in society *and* establishes a correlation between individual responsibility and the acquisition of those skills. Similarly, the charity should avoid the ‘evils’ of being operated in an ‘opportunistic’ manner; instead, they should operate like a business does by having a business strategy and a professionalised approach. By governing themselves in such a way, neoliberal governmentality encouraged SportHelp to think of themselves as a ‘good’ charity that was “improve[ing] national well-being” (to re-quote Rose above).

Despite neoliberalism presenting itself as a ‘regime of truth’ (Read, 2009), Larner and Butler (2005) emphatically indicate that neoliberal rationalities of governance are *not* neutral; they pander to a neoliberal agenda. As such, my data reveal a lacklustre image. As I outlined earlier in the thesis, UK charities are significant providers of non-formal education, whereby the overarching purpose of non-formal education is to meet young people’s needs. Before a charity can *actually* meet young people’s needs, it must first exist and be funded. Given the hyper-competitive landscape, and that charities (unlike for-profit businesses) struggle to generate their own revenue (and instead rely on donations and funders), charities occupy a deeply vulnerable space in UK society. To cope with this vulnerability, neoliberal governmentality encouraged SportHelp to become a ‘quasi-market’ – and this has certainly helped the charity economically speaking. Unfortunately, SportHelp did not have an alternative: as I mentioned earlier, the charity could either be a “funded sheep, or unfunded goat” (Harris, Mori and Collins, 2009, p. 420).

This is problematic because it suggests that charities, unless they are capable of drawing funds from wealthy personal friends (which is rarely the case), have little recourse but to become ‘quasi-markets’. This in itself is not a new finding (Buckingham, 2009; Fyfe, Timbrell and Smith, 2006; Fyfe, 2005), but it serves to illustrate the struggle the charity sector endures:

“Yeah, I completely agree [about the results not necessarily being tailored to the needs of the kids but to what the funders might want as outputs]. There’s a lot of... it’s, to be honest, if I was being

crude, it would be borderline hypocrisy. What our main challenge is, is to balance the needs of the people who pay for the programs to be there in the first place with the needs of the people who access the programs. I think there are a lot of underlying, slightly naïve assumptions about the nature of the issues and the issues the young people encounter, and that's naïveté from us, but also from funders, so they will pay on outcomes that are completely impossible to deliver, or don't make a great deal of relevance. The whole sort of, they call it the bums on seats approach, whereby lots of funders, big funders, will fund just through people come through the door. How many people have you had come through the door in the last six months? Oh, 100? Well, get it up to 120 in 3 months' time, brilliant. 120? Done. Have your money. But that doesn't make a great deal of sense when we are talking about sport for development. It is actually more difficult to develop people the more people you have on your program. These are the kinds of things we are constantly battling against. Through experience, through knowledge expertise of the staff, we can go "OK, we're going to show you this set of results, but we know that our decisions and our evidence and our research are influencing what is on the ground. You don't need to know that, but we are influencing it on the ground, with the ultimate outcome or consequence of giving you a nice shiny report that says everyone is doing well" (Dane).

Though Dane, in his quote above, talks about 'borderline hypocrisy' and the struggles of SportHelp, there was not a substantial amount he could do to resist neoliberal governmentality. Similarly, Natalie spoke about the danger "that the tail wags the dog and you lose sight of what you're really here to do", but again, SportHelp needed to comply with New Public Management and responsabilisation to be deemed a 'good' charity worthy of receiving funding (MacKinnon, 2000). The alternative to compliance, as I have already indicated, is worse: with no funding, SportHelp cannot offer sport programmes at all. It is at this crossroads that my data leads to an important question: what are the implications of SportHelp re-shaping itself into a 'quasi-market'?

Notably, the central concern of SportHelp becoming a ‘quasi-market’ is the charity’s deficit-reduction approach towards supporting socio-economically disadvantaged young people. Considering that non-formal education initiatives aim to meet youth’s needs (Souto-Otero, 2016), SportHelp largely understood meeting these needs in terms of ‘fixing’ young people’s ‘deficiencies’ by inculcating in them the SFG life-skills framework, discipline, and individual responsibility⁷⁸. This is problematic on several fronts. A deficit-reduction approach is rooted in the neoliberal assumption that young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are inherently ‘damaged’ or ‘inadequate’ *because* of their deprived background (Brown, 2015; McNerney and Smyth, 2015). Instead of treating socio-economic disadvantage as a complex community-based social problem, it is reduced to an individual problem (Jamrozik, 2009; Harkness, Gregg and Macmillan, 2012). Therefore, the ‘fixing’ process is not rooted in changing existing social structures which promote inequality and which led to the socio-economic disadvantaged in the first place (Kelly, 2011; Kelly, 2001). A deficit-reduction approach ignores such contextual issues and aims to ‘patch-up’ young people by transforming them into neoliberal citizens; what Foucault (2008) calls *homo oeconomicus*: an entrepreneur of the self.

Furthermore, by adopting increasing levels of safeguarding policies and procedures – attempting to manage risk (Ruch, 2012) as a ‘quasi-market’ – SportHelp further emphasises the deficit-reduction approach by focusing on risk management instead of prioritising young people’s needs (Rogowski, 2014; Rogowski, 2015). Taken in combination, and recalling the contents of Dane’s extensive quote a few paragraphs ago, it is imperative to interrogate how SportHelp – and other charities – are supporting socio-economically disadvantaged young people. If a ‘good’ charity is characterised by operating like a business, attempting to manage risk, and ‘individualising the social’, is that the purpose of non-formal education? Does that constitute meeting young people’s needs? This is a debate I will return to throughout this chapter and the conclusion of my thesis. For now, I move on to the second part of the chapter. Having

⁷⁸ An in-depth examination of this process is reserved for the next section of the chapter.

outlined how the neoliberal landscape shaped SportHelp into a ‘quasi-market’, and the implications it had in terms of nudging the charity to adopt a deficit-reduction approach, I now examine what this deficit-reduction approach looks like and why it re-shaped young people’s personhood.

Implementing a deficit-reduction approach: Re-shaping personhood

SportHelp’s deficit-reduction approach consisted in using sport, as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, to re-shape young people’s notions of personhood. These notions of personhood – what it means to be a ‘good’ citizen – were underpinned by the technologies of individual responsibility, discipline, and the SFG life-skills. Therefore, the charity’s deficit-reduction approach consisted in ‘fixing’ socio-economically disadvantaged young people’s ‘deficiencies’ by re-sculpting them into neoliberal persons. Though sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality was central to this re-shaping process, my aim in the current section is to unpack *how* SportHelp emphasised individual responsibility, discipline, and SFG’s life skills, and *why* these concepts re-configured young people into neoliberal citizens. I will explore each of those three concepts in turn before addressing how sport functioned as a technology of neoliberal governmentality in the next part of the chapter.

For Kelly (2006), “youth is thus a ‘process of simultaneously “un-becoming” a child and becoming an adult’” (p. 26). The deficit-reduction, ‘youth-at-risk’ discourse suggests that, without the ‘right’ support in place, socio-economically disadvantaged youths are in danger of failing to become ‘good’ adults. SportHelp conceptualised young people’s current ‘deficits’ in terms of coming from “slightly more chaotic backgrounds, backgrounds of imbalance, or ill-discipline, or disadvantage, deprivation” (Dane) and “from very dysfunctional families [...] and it is really pretty grim” (Natalie). Similarly, Lisa spoke about SportHelp’s participants being “parents, they are looking after brothers and sisters... their parents might be drug addicts, their parents might have mental health issues, their parents might not be able to read or write...”. These are all very real issues, and are indicative of how young people from lower socio-economic

backgrounds are likelier to endure more stressors than their equivalents from a higher socio-economic standing (Dubois et al., 1992). The deficit-reduction approach towards dealing with these stressors is to 'individualise the social' (Jamrozik, 2009) by suggesting the 'solution' is to 'teach' young people how to cope with those conditions *instead* of attempting to address the social inequalities which led to the conditions in the first place:

"Imagining Youth at-risk in terms of deficit provokes a range of interventionist regimes that take as their object the transformation of the cultural resources of the disadvantaged – a transformation that has as its end the development of an entrepreneurial Subject" (Kelly, 2006, p. 27; italics in original).

The 'entrepreneurial Subject' is Foucault's (2008, p. 147) *homo oeconomicus*, "the man of enterprise and production". In this light, Kelly (2006, p. 18) envisages the 'entrepreneurial Subject' or the 'entrepreneurial Self' as

"... a form of personhood that sees individuals as being responsible for conducting themselves, in the business of life, as an enterprise, a project, a work in progress".

Thus, SportHelp's deficit-reduction approach aims to 'fix' the 'deficiencies' stemming from young people's stressor-infused backgrounds by re-shaping their personhood so adolescents become 'good' adults. This goal was palpable from my interviews with managers, coaches, and young people: Lisa spoke about instilling social, thinking, emotional, and physical skills in young people because "it will help you become better", whilst Dane added how the value of this approach was for young people to "have control of their own positive development". Echoing these points, Coach Vincent felt SportHelp sessions were about "developing you as a person"; Coach Alfred used table tennis "as a tool to build great human beings", and Coach Karl wanted his participants to "be a perfect – not perfect – but a really good citizen in the country". Young people also understood how SportHelp sessions were about developing

personhood: Orange was aware Coach Vincent is “trying to make you a better person” and Carys outlined how SportHelp sessions are provided for those who demonstrate the ‘right’ character: “cos, obviously, we have to earn it, so, we have to be dedicated”.

I will now address the three core messages SportHelp promoted on their quest to ‘improve’ young people’s personhood: individual responsibility, discipline, and life-skills. This trio of elements, I argue, served to encourage young people to conceptualise ‘good’ personhood in terms of neoliberal citizenship; in terms of being an ‘entrepreneur of the Self’. Exploring what forms of governmentality SportHelp promoted matters because conversations

“about ‘what is just, right, and good’ [...] are at the heart of all social, cultural, and political conflicts – conflicts that inevitably shape the well-being and ‘development’ of youth, children, and adults alike” (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2011, p. 679).

Individual responsibility

The first way SportHelp implemented a deficit-reduction approach was by emphasising individual responsibility. Managers, coaches, and young people highlighted how a young person’s development was, fundamentally, ‘up to them’. Dane spoke about ensuring young people “have control of **their**⁷⁹ own positive development” whilst Lisa liked to remind young people that “if **you** can behave like this for my session, surely **you** can behave like that for your teacher session!”. Coach Vincent also put the onus on young people to understand how “an expectation is that basketball is a privilege for them” and that “if **they** are not meeting their expectations with their teachers, their parents ... **they** lose some of their basketball privileges”. Coach Jake talked about removing Gustav from the one-to-one table tennis programme because **his** attitude was not progressing, whilst Karl highlighted how one the young people

⁷⁹ The boldface emphasis on the words throughout this chapter has been added (unless said otherwise).

who eventually dropped out of the basketball programme and school happened because “if **he** doesn’t want to help **himself**, I can’t help him at all”.

The value of individual responsibility was also espoused by young people. Tia, in fear of losing her basketball privileges, said “... now, as a person, **I** behave so well in class” whilst Orange reflected how Coach Vincent could “make you feel separated, so **you** don’t do that thing again”. Fish thought life was hard, and as such, “**you** should take as many opportunities as **you** have in life”. When Carys was confronted by Jake’s ultimatum of ‘in life, you always have a boss and two choices: either accept the boss’s orders, or change boss’, it was up to **her** to make a responsible choice.

This collection of quotes illustrates the strength of the personal responsibility narrative. Young people were expected to maximise their opportunities and make ‘good’ choices, whereby ‘good’ was defined in terms of meeting behavioural expectations, timeliness, and seeking to take ownership over their own development. Those young people who learned to govern themselves by demonstrating individual responsibility enjoyed greater favour by their coaches, which, in turn, acted as a positive re-enforcement to continue re-shaping oneself into a personally responsible citizen. This is reflected in the data repeatedly. Fish and Orange spoke about how Coach Vincent cared about committed people who are not “too much of a distraction”⁸⁰. Carys also internalised the value of taking ownership over her own development by demonstrating dedication, which in turn was rewarded with one-to-one sessions with Coach Jake. Contrary to Carys, Gustav’s lack of attitude development (he was not trying to improve **his** communication skills, for instance) edged him closer to being removed from Jake’s sessions. Likewise, Karl expected young people (whether they had behavioural difficulties or not) to ‘want to help themselves’ in the first place.

⁸⁰ Meaning that they do not have behavioural problems which require a great deal of energy and focus to ‘contain’ or ‘stifle’.

By internalising the neoliberal belief that success is bred from making responsible choices, adolescents learned to unwittingly reject the impact of the environment and wider social structures on their lives (Kelly, 2011). This means that a 'good citizen' is someone who can always 'help themselves' regardless of their context. By implication, those who cannot are either 'weak', 'not good enough people', or as Fish put it, "this generation, they are kind of lazy. Really lazy. Some people think life is going to be easy, but it is not as easy as it seems". Therefore, individual responsibility re-shaped young people's notions of personhood by equating 'good' self-hood with being

"fully autonomous entities who exist prior to and separate from the linguistic, social, and cultural practices in which they choose to participate" (Sugarman, 2014, p. 66).

This form of personhood reduces the social to the individual (Harkness, Gregg and Macmillan, 2012). The 'linguistic, social, and cultural practices' which can take the form of multiple stressors on young people's lives are simplified into a rhetoric whereby, regardless of a person's context, a 'good' human being can always 'help themselves'. This is what it means to be an 'entrepreneur of the Self' (Kelly, 2006); an individual who is "responsible for the always in-process, always provisional, always precarious state of the Do It Yourself (DIY) project of the self" (Kelly, 2017, pp. 57-58). Thus, an entrepreneur of the self always seeks to improve themselves, to 'better' themselves. To take responsibility for their own behaviour, for their own learning (Sugarman, 2015). Just like SportHelp demonstrated entrepreneurship by acknowledging they needed to "generate your own results, and own your results" (Dane), young people were likewise encouraged to 'generate your own improvement, and own your improvement'. The neoliberal 'logic' is simple: SportHelp, by embracing individual responsibility and re-configuring itself into a 'quasi-market' (an enterprise), attracted donors and funders. It became a 'better' charity. Likewise, young people who internalise individual responsibility and treat themselves as an enterprise, will become 'better' people with more access to jobs and upwards social mobility (Kumar, 2012).

However, echoing Kelly (2006), I do not dismiss ‘responsibility’ or ‘entrepreneurship’ as undesirable traits *in themselves*. Whilst there is nothing toxic about encouraging young people to take a more active role in their development *per se*, what is problematic is when ‘personal responsibility’ is re-imagined in relation to neoliberal values of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ (Kelly, 2006). Those who make ‘good’ personal choices, and strive to better themselves *regardless of their social background* are ‘winners’. Contrarily, those who failed to maximise their freedom (Peck and Tickell, 2007) by failing to make the choices that would ‘save’ them from the stressors associated to socio-economic disadvantage, are seen as ‘losers’. Therefore, the problem of wedding individual responsibility to ‘good’ personhood is that the social is individualised. By taking a deficit-reduction approach, SportHelp ‘taught’ the young people they worked with – adolescents coming from “slightly more chaotic backgrounds” (Dane) featuring stressors such as “maybe they do self-harm” or “their parents might be drug addicts” (Lisa) – that a ‘good’ person demonstrates responsibility for *their* improvement *regardless* of their context (Brann-Barrett, 2011).

The emphasis on individual responsibility as a ‘self-steering mechanism’ (Rose, 1996) re-constructs what it *means* to be a human being:

“These ways of thinking about humans as selves, and these ways of judging them, are linked to certain ways of acting upon such selves” (Rose, 1996, p. 151, italics in original).

Thus, the neoliberal conceptualisation of individual responsibility breeds an understanding of personhood as a-contextual, whereby a person’s historical and sociocultural factors are largely overlooked. This understanding of personhood is not neutral – it is the product of neoliberal technologies of governmentality (Larner and Butler, 2005). Martin et al. (2003) and Martin and McLellan (2013) offer an alternative conceptualisation of personhood, one which embraces each person’s unique historical and socio-cultural background; one that does not propose to reduce the social to the individual. Instead, for them, a ‘good’ human being is critical and reflective, not only about their own context, but other people’s

too. This alternative form of personhood seeks to take a more empathic approach towards other human beings, instead of a deficit-reduction approach whereby misfortune is either blamed or reduced to the individual (Giroux, 2005, Torrance, 2017). Whilst individual responsibility eulogises the ‘entrepreneur of the Self’ who rises above his or her complex socio-cultural background, Martin et al. (2003) understand ‘good’ personhood in terms of promoting an

“ongoing dialogical exchange in the shared effort to expand the horizon of intelligibility within which to understand and respond to individual and collective concerns” (Sugarman, 2014, p. 67).

Discipline

The second way SportHelp implemented a deficit-reduction approach was by emphasising discipline. Discipline was wedded to individual responsibility and the entrepreneurial Self because it was up to each young person to improve *their* behaviour and thus, become ‘better’ people. Coach Karl described how he expected the adolescents on his programme “to be disciplined”, whilst Coach Alfred clarified that “they know they are here not to mess around”. Coach Vincent valued precision as a form of discipline, and frequently spoke to his participants about ‘being precise’. In turn, young people strongly internalised the value of discipline and spoke about it helping them become ‘good people’. For Tia, without Karl, “there wouldn’t be any discipline. We’d just have a coach we can walk all over. We don’t want that”. Fish highlighted how discipline “shows you are a good person”, whilst Orange added that discipline means “be organised. Stuff like that. I don’t know, it’s just ingrained in what coach talks about all the time. Discipline in training”.

Despite strongly valuing discipline, the coaches’ approaches towards fostering discipline were ‘softer’ than the schools’ methods. Coach Alfred likened his school’s disciplinary system to “a dictatorship”, whilst Coach Karl indicated that staff in his school begin their relationships with young

people “with a harder approach”. The difference between the coaches’ ‘softer’ approach, and the schools’ ‘harder’ one, was explained by Tia:

“If you do something wrong, then, he’ll [Coach Karl] come down on you like... he’ll just come down on you. But, if you haven’t done anything wrong, then he has no reason to be... like strict, he’ll be fun, he’ll bring out his bubbly side...”

Tia’s analysis echoed the rest of the young people’s feelings with regards to their own coaches. Unlike teachers, who were perceived by young people as always being strict, the coaches only administered discipline when necessary. Otherwise, they were ‘bubbly’ (as Tia put it) and engaging. However, in addition to the young people knowing they should not ‘mess around’ during SportHelp sessions (to borrow Coach Alfred’s expression), coaches enforced discipline by administering punishments. When young people failed to meet expectations, either academically or behaviourally, they were banned from training or games. Though these bans were handed out reluctantly by coaches – they did not want to discourage adolescents from playing the sport – such punishments were regarded as a ‘necessary evil’. When young people were banned, or punished, coaches would ensure the young person understood why their actions resulted in a punishment, and what *they* had to change to avoid repeating the ‘offence’. These data illustrate how discipline, for SportHelp, entailed

“the establishment of norms, routines and interventions with young people concerned with monitoring their attitudes and behaviours [...] manifested as teaching young people basic rules, etiquettes, and habits of mind concerned with self-improvement and responsibility” (Hodgson, 2016, p. 11).

As is the case with individual responsibility, each young person monitoring *their* discipline is part of the process of becoming *homo oeconomicus*; an entrepreneur of oneself (Foucault, 2008). Young people had to ensure *their* behaviour – regardless of the context – conformed with the expectations their

coaches had: to be docile (Foucault, 1977). In line with a deficit-reduction approach, whereby adolescents from lower socio-economic backgrounds are perceived as ‘unruly’ and lacking in ‘good behaviour’ (McInerney and Smyth, 2015), SportHelp sought to instil self-control within young people. This is what Beatrice was referring to when she suggested that “for an investment of Y, this coach has a massive impact on your kids, *particularly those that can be very challenging*” (emphasis added to original). Therefore, SportHelp’s concern with discipline is to ensure young people’s behaviour is “kept in check at all costs” (Barber, 2009, p. 36). Discipline, and its ties to individual responsibility, is exemplified by Orange:

“I mean, from training I’ve learnt to keep myself calm. When coach shouts at me, like, if I wasn’t disciplined, I’d probably shout back. I knew someone that did” (Orange).

Orange indicated how the quality of his personhood was superior to that of his peer’s given this person had shouted back at his coach. The implication is that Orange, by internalising discipline, has become a ‘better’ person. Akin to my analysis about individual responsibility, there is a stark lack of contextual awareness on display. Thus, the neoliberal conceptualisation of discipline, with its aim to “regulate, control, contain” (Giroux, 2005, p. 8), impresses on young people that it is up to *them* to demonstrate discipline. This is problematic because conversations about behaviour management are, once again, subjected to an individualisation of the social. Therefore, instead of acknowledging a young person’s historical and socio-cultural context, SportHelp expect young people to *always* be disciplined: “if you can behave like this for my [sport] session, surely you can behave like that for your teacher session!” (Lisa). Unfortunately, the sport session and teacher session contexts Lisa refers to were substantially different: as I address later in the chapter, young people *wanted* to play their sport in the company of their coach. Contrarily, adolescents rarely wanted to be in class or in the company of their teachers. This contextual difference is significant to *understand* why young people behave in different ways, but it was

largely ignored because the overarching goal was to develop adolescents – as entrepreneurs of the Self – who demonstrated self-control *in all contexts*.

Though SportHelp's approach to 'control' young people's behavioural 'deficits' was not malicious, Hodgson (2016, p. 9) indicates that despite how

“these disciplinary practices are pitched as benign, they are containers for normative power that articulate threads of neoliberal rationalities” (Hodgson, 2016, p. 9).

Thus, SportHelp's conceptualisation of discipline encouraged young people to 'work on themselves' by 'controlling' their behaviour. This entrepreneurial approach was equated to 'good' personhood, as Fish pointed out: “discipline shows you're a good person”. The value of this entrepreneurial attitude, fundamentally, is to 'fix' the assumed 'deficiencies' in disadvantaged young people's lives to help them become neoliberal adult citizens (Kelly, 2006). In turn, the “ideal individual is someone who contributes to a flourishing economy” (Siivonen and Brunila, 2014, p. 162) – a conceptualisation which resonated with Coach Karl:

“I am all about making them into this model citizen, always giving them an example, for example, one of the sixth formers, he keeps coming late to breakfast club, and, he's 17, so I'm saying 'next year, you're going to be 18, you're going to go to work. If you turn up 3 or 4 times late to work, what's going to happen? You're going to lose your job.’”

Underlying this rhetoric of discipline is the neoliberal aversion to risk. Discipline constitutes an attempt to 'control' and 'manage' risk, particularly when 'risk' is conceived in terms of what Beatrice called “very challenging behaviours”. By encouraging young people to be compliant and monitor their behaviour to act “in an orderly fashion” and “not be rude” (Orange), SportHelp “assign[ed] a hegemony of the expected and the acceptable, in terms of young people's behaviours” (Brown et al., 2013, p. 334). Whilst being shouted at is acceptable, shouting back is not tolerated. Likewise, not demonstrating personal

responsibility to improve one's behaviour is not acceptable; a 'good' young person should aim to "know what's wrong" and to "listen to our teachers, and our coach" (Fish). Having illustrated the function of discipline in SportHelp's deficit-reduction approach, I now move on to explore the third and final means the charity used to re-sculpt young people into neoliberal citizens: the implementation of specific life-skills.

Life skills

The third way SportHelp implemented a deficit-reduction was through the promotion of the charity's life-skills framework, SFG. As I discussed previously in the thesis, SFG was developed over four years, and constituted an organisational shift as it became the bedrock upon which the SportHelp ethos and its programmes were built. Dane's hope for SFG was that, in time, it would become "an organisational currency, whereby we can almost buy, sell, or trade, in SFG [...] because it has that almost explicit, tangible, existence". The framework consists of twelve life skills which the charity, following a lengthy consultation process with managers, coaches, consultants, academics, and young people, decided would be appropriate to a) instil in adolescents to help them become 'better' people ("achieve their potential" – Beatrice), and b) use to monitor and report the charity's own outcomes:

"That's why we do SFG, ultimately, so we can prove our model works, so we can raise more money, so that we can open more programs" (Beatrice).

The twelve life skills in SFG include teamwork, leadership, communication, self-reflection, and determination (as well as seven more items⁸¹). Considering life skills refer to "adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (Jones and Lavalley, 2009, p. 159), the link between SFG and a deficit-reduction approach becomes

⁸¹ I have not disclosed the full framework for anonymity purposes.

clearer. The charity's goal was to instil "desirable competencies or outcomes in young people" (Gould and Carson, 2008, p. 59) that would 'fix' disadvantaged young people's 'deficiencies' or 'undesirable' competencies. Acquiring these life skills was part of becoming a 'good' person; whereby 'better' people demonstrated greater proficiency across the twelve life skills. Therefore, the inculcation of SportHelp's preferred life skills is tied to the 'entrepreneurial Self' (Kelly, 2006) in that, akin to individual responsibility and discipline, the charity encouraged young people to work and 'improve on themselves'. The assumed value of this improvement was that life skills can be "learned in one domain (e.g., sport) [and] can be generalised or transferred to other domains (e.g., family, school, peers, workplace, community)" (Weiss, Bolter and Kipp, 2014, p. 264):

"It means that these life skills which you now take on, not only for a sporting element, you can use them within your everyday life, within the school, and it will help you to become better, rather than you just thinking 'OK, I can only apply this to sport'" (Lisa).

Despite Lisa suggesting life skills "will help you become better", what is 'good' or 'better' is not value-free (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2011). To invoke and paraphrase Spaaij (2009), it is necessary to ask *why* those twelve life skills were selected, and what their purpose is. As Hodge et al. (2016) articulate,

"what constitutes life skills has multiple meanings, and how we define life skills significantly affects both the kinds of interventions developed and how we measure whether we have successfully taught these skills" (p. 46)

In short, the "whole point of SFG is to demonstrate that what we do has positive impact" (Beatrice). 'Positive impact', in terms of the deficit-reduction approach SportHelp took, consisted in 'equipping' disadvantaged young people with life skills that would make them "become better" (as Lisa stated earlier). In a neoliberal society, the attributes that are valued are what Rudd (2005) calls 'social values' which are "heavily based on a capitalistic economy and 'mentality'" (p. 207). These values,

encompassing teamwork, loyalty, and self-sacrifice (which resonate with SFG) stand in contrast to ‘moral values’ like honesty, fairness, and social responsibility⁸² (Rudd, 2005). ‘Social values’ are championed over ‘moral values’ because they stimulate economic growth. Considering “the ideal individual is someone who contributes to a flourishing economy” (Siivonen and Brunila, 2014, p. 162), re-shaping disadvantaged young people into ‘enterprises’ who can enter the labour market and align with the neoliberal ‘jungle law’ market paradigm is a process that is in the best interests of a neoliberal society. Therefore, the SFG life skills framework re-sculpts young people by encouraging them to embrace “the responsibility to capitalise one’s life in such a way that it has economic value” (Simons and Masschelein, 2008, p. 55).

A further indication of how SportHelp’s collection of life skills re-configured young people into neoliberal citizens is the extent to which the SFG strategy pandered to prospective donors. Considering the hyper-competitive neoliberal landscape forced SportHelp to articulate a business case which ‘spoke’ to funders (Coalter, 2010), SFG needed to feature life skills which the government and Corporate Social Responsibility budgets would value as outputs and outcomes. This is why ‘teamwork’, ‘leadership’, or ‘determination’, despite being as un-measurable as ‘moral values’ (like fairness), were still preferred. Lisa acknowledged that “it’s very, very fuzzy to use a world like ‘life skills’, it’s a bit like SFG, it’s very fuzzy”. However, she then exemplified how she worked with young people who perhaps started off “at a level 2 in terms of their communication” and after years on SportHelp’s programme, “now they are at a level 6!” Communication is no more quantifiable than fairness, but communication is a skill the neoliberal labour market values *more* than fairness. Furthermore, the SFG framework is underpinned by individual responsibility; it highlights to young people the correlation between making personally responsible choices (internalising the framework’s life skills) and a person’s outcomes (becoming a ‘better’ human

⁸² There is a distinction between moral ‘responsibility’ and neoliberal ‘responsibility’. As per Rudd (2005), the former is broadly concerned with social justice and ‘doing what is right’, whilst the latter is focused on maximising one’s freedom through personal choices.

being) (Kumar, 2012). Thus, a ‘good’ young person is somebody who ‘works on themselves’ to ‘improve’ their ‘deficiencies’ by mastering the social values outlined in SFG⁸³.

Akin to how I previously suggested there is nothing *inherently* inadequate about promoting individual responsibility and discipline, the twelve life skills within the ‘Sport For Good’ framework are not themselves undesirable. Mitch spoke about improving his leadership skills, Carys outlined how she “got a bit more confident”, and H. described a development in his communication abilities. For Tia, “some of the things you learn in basketball, you take it outside into school life”. The problem, as I have already advanced, is when these life skills are fostered in relation to the free market paradigm⁸⁴. In this light, ‘communication’ and ‘teamwork’ serve to ‘plug the gaps’ in socio-economically disadvantaged young people’s ‘deficient’ personhood by teaching them life skills that will help them become ‘good’ neoliberal citizens. However, there is more to ‘good’ personhood than using life skills as a deficit-reduction approach (Kelly, 2006). For instance, SportHelp could have promoted ‘moral values’ (Rudd, 2005) like honesty and fairness, or the development of a ‘self’ which seeks to empathise with others by seeking to understand their unique historical and socio-cultural background (Martin, Sugarman and Hickinbottom, 2003).

Why is re-shaping personhood through a neoliberal deficit-reduction approach problematic?

SportHelp implemented a deficit-reduction approach towards supporting socio-economically disadvantaged young people by emphasising individual responsibility, discipline, and the acquisition of specific life skills. The outcome of implementing this trio of practices was to “produce certain outcomes in terms of human conduct” (Rose, 1996, p. 88). This outcome was the ‘entrepreneurial Self’ (Kelly, 2006), a young person who seeks to constantly improve themselves by taking responsibility for their learning,

⁸³ Even teamwork was treated individually by asking questions such as ‘how good are you at teamwork?’

⁸⁴ Returning to the example of teamwork; teamwork was considered individually by questions probing for ‘how good are you at teamwork?’ Teamwork is not *just* based simply on a person’s skill at it – the environment matters. Whilst I may be good at teamwork with a close friend, there is a good chance I would be a terrible at it if partnered with an authoritarian, sexist bigot.

developing discipline and self-control, and acquiring life skills suitable for the labour market. Thus, SportHelp re-sculpted what it *means* to be a human being; what it *means* to be a 'good' person. By adopting a neoliberal deficit-reduction approach, whereby socio-economically disadvantaged young people are assumed to be unable, unwilling, or "incapable of exercising responsible self-government" (Rose, 2000, p. 331), SportHelp 'taught' adolescents that 'good people' make personally responsible choices, demonstrate discipline, and acquire *specific* life skills.

SportHelp's deficit-reduction approach echoes Soss, Fording and Schram's (2011, p. 1) thesis that "the poor exist perennially as subjects who must be governed". As Beatrice indicated, the charity's remit "is to help young people, mainly in disadvantaged communities, achieve their potential using sport as a medium". The concepts of 'help' and 'achieve their potential' were re-configured – even hijacked – to re-shape the conduct of young people's conduct (Rose, 2000). What makes this process particularly powerful and prone to being internalised by SportHelp's young participants is not that they are inherently gullible. It is that adolescence is a key 'in-between' developmental stage of life where one transitions from childhood to adulthood (Billett, 2011); where one 'un-becomes' a child and 'becomes' an adult (Kelly, 2006).

The transition into adulthood is marked by reducing dependence on primary caregivers and embarking on a quest for personal discovery (Allen and Land, 1999; Ridge, 2002). Exposure to neoliberal technologies of governmentality during this developmental phase can result in uncritically accepting individual responsibility, discipline, and specific life skills as 'true' markers of 'good' personhood. In turn, and given neoliberal governmentality presents itself as a "regime of truth" (Read, 2009, p. 28), there is a real danger of young people unquestionably accepting this ethos and thus maturing into uncritical adults, engulfed by the neoliberal world view. This, I contend, amounts to an "imprisonment so total that the prisoner doesn't even know he's locked up" (Wallace, 2009, p. 32). The implications of such an 'imprisonment' are deeply problematic for two reasons.

Firstly, by re-shaping what it *means* to be a ‘good’ human being, neoliberal governmentality reduces

“the concepts of ‘competence’, ‘character’, ‘caring’, ‘prepared’ and ‘productive’ adulthood and so on [into] self-evident, unproblematic and easily measurable terms, rather than being controversial and politicized social and cultural constructs” (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2011, p. 679).

Under the auspices of neoliberal governmentality, there is no debate about what makes a ‘good’ person – it is ‘self-evident’ that a ‘good’ human being demonstrates individual responsibility, discipline, and specific life skills. Therefore, the neoliberal ‘regime of truth’ removes the opportunity to discuss the extremely complex ideas surrounding what personhood *is*. By removing the opportunity to debate, to engage in a dialogue, neoliberal governmentality constitutes a mechanism of oppression:

“Critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation. The content of that dialogue can and should vary in accordance with historical conditions and the level at which the oppressed perceive reality. But to substitute monologue, slogans, and communiqués for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication. Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated” (Freire, 2003, p. 65).

The second reason why the ‘total imprisonment’ of neoliberal governmentality is problematic is that in extolling individual responsibility, neoliberal ideals situate themselves as being beyond reproach. Since human beings are given the ‘power’ to improve *their* conditions and personhood, both success and failure is individualised. The extent to which one succeeds or fails becomes a reflection of the quality of somebody’s personhood. In the midst of this process, neoliberal ideals and neoliberal society are left ‘off

the hook'; neoliberalism neither examines 'itself' nor considers the extent to which social problems are a *reflection* of neoliberal values:

"For far too long we've been told that 'there is no alternative', that 'a rising tide lifts all boats', that we live in a Darwinian nightmare world of all against all 'survival of the fittest'. We've swallowed the idea of the 'tragedy of the commons'⁸⁵ hook, line and sinker; when in reality this is a ruse that actually reflects the 'tragedy of capitalism' and its endless wars of plunder" (Springer, 2016, p. 288).

Lastly, it is important to remember that whilst the characteristics associated to neoliberal governmentality (individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills like 'communication' or 'teamwork') are not in and of themselves undesirable, "they are not the only, and not necessarily the most appropriate, markers of who it is that we should become" (Kelly, 2006, p. 30). As I have suggested, there is a great deal more to 'good' personhood which deviates from market rationalities, such as fairness and honesty (Rudd, 2005) or seeking to solve collective problems by empathising with other people's lives (Martin, Sugarman and Hickinbottom, 2003). Having illustrated how SportHelp implemented a deficit-reduction approach through the technologies of individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills, I now move onto the third part of the discussion chapter: why sport is a suitable vessel to promote a neoliberal understanding of personhood.

⁸⁵ The parable of the 'tragedy of the commons' and its link to neoliberalism is succinctly outlined by Nixon (2012): "According to this brief parable, a herdsman faced with the temptations of a common pasture will instinctively overload it with his livestock. As each greed-driven individual strives to maximise the resources for personal gain, the commons collapses to the detriment of all. [...] [This] succinct parable [has] helped vindicate a neoliberal rescue narrative, whereby privatization through enclosure, dispossession, and resource capture is deemed necessary for averting tragedy" (p. 593)

Sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality

To implement a deficit-reduction approach by instilling individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills in young people, SportHelp relied on sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality. The charity reified and venerated sport uncritically, assuming it was an unquestionable force for good which is capable of social regeneration and person improvement. This belief – what Giulianotti (2004) calls ‘sport evangelism’ – was pervasive amongst the managers’, coaches’, and young people’s accounts. Natalie said she completely bought “into the vision that sport can do so much to teach children things that they aren’t necessarily learning through the lack of role models”. Lisa suggested that “sport has always been something that has been used for leadership, for development, to empower” and how “you become a different character through sport”. When Dane spoke about the development of SFG and its twelve life skills (like ‘communication’ or ‘determination’), he suggested that “these are age-old concepts, we’ve just given them a SportHelp name, they are not dissimilar to anything you’ve [coaches] already been doing”⁸⁶.

Though the coaches spoke about life skills and how they imparted them in their sessions, my observations suggested that the bulk of the sport sessions were devoted to teaching sport skills. This, again, highlights the subtle assumption that sport was achieving *more* than just enhancing a sport skillset: “SFG is all around us, we do it, unconsciously” (Coach Karl). In turn, the young people were indoctrinated in the coaches’ sport evangelist beliefs. For Tia, “you’re learning, understanding, developing... through basketball”, whilst Fish came to appreciate that you should “focus on your education within basketball”. H. described how Coach Karl “had to get me in that habit of talking on the court, and obviously, that helped me outside as well. So I talked to other people as well”⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ The assumption being that sport *inherently* fosters the social, thinking, emotional, and physical characteristics in SFG. The framework, therefore, was only giving a name to something that was *already* happening through sport.

⁸⁷ H. suggests that the skills one learns in sport are automatically transferable to domains outside of sport.

The sport evangelist narrative espoused by the managers, coaches, and young people is common. Their view of sport as inherently great and capable of social regeneration is both pervasive and well documented (Coakley, 2016; Coalter, 2007A; Coalter, 2015; Houlihan, Bloyce and Smith, 2009). Part of what makes these 'storylines' of sport (Houlihan, Bloyce and Smith, 2009) endure is that sport continues to be envisaged as a tool which can 'fix' disadvantaged young people's 'deficits' (Coakley, 2002). Lisa indicated as much when she said:

"It has to be through sport. Because if we're not being able to grasp those elements⁸⁸ through sport, then we're not really teaching our young people the key concepts of what they need to learn" (Lisa).

Sport was assumed to provide something that young people lacked. That 'something' was individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills; the hallmarks of a 'good' citizen. Therefore, SportHelp used sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality to re-shape the conduct of young people's conduct. However, as I discuss next, there is a reason managers and coaches felt sport was an appropriate vehicle to meet the charity's deficit-reduction goals: sport and neoliberalism share common values. After highlighting the similarities between sport and neoliberal values, I analyse how the coaches, as 'neoliberal transformative leaders', harnessed the technology of sport to re-shape young people's notions of personhood. Lastly, I depict how the coaches fostered aggression (in terms of resilience) to encourage young people to survive in the neoliberal 'jungle law'.

⁸⁸ By 'those elements' Lisa refers to how coaches, as role models and mentors, 'teach' SFG life skills

Sport and neoliberalism: Two peas in a pod

“Sport serves as the literal model of the ideal or moral standard to which communities and social orders should aspire and by which social life itself is constituted and maintained” (Hartmann, 2016, p. 55).

Hartmann’s quote captures the parallels between sport and neoliberalism. When he says ‘sport serves as the literal model of the ideal or moral standard’, Hartmann refers to how sport serves at the *physical embodiment* of what constitutes ‘good personhood’. This, as I have outlined throughout this chapter, is a neoliberal conceptualisation of citizenship. ‘Good’ personhood entails taking an entrepreneurial approach to one’s life and seeking to improve oneself through demonstrating individual responsibility, discipline, and the acquisition of life skills. Therefore, whilst neoliberalism is both invisible and intangible – hence the use of phrases like ‘the invisible hand of the market’ – sport is both visible and tangible. It is a vessel for neoliberal values because sport values share common ground with neoliberal ones. As Coakley (2011A) shows, the assumptions underpinning sport are that a) competition is the ‘logical’ method to assess merit; b) the belief that winning (within a competitive reward structure) indicates ability and moral worth; and c) it encourages displays of individual responsibility (whereby those who work hard ‘succeed’ and those who do not ‘fail’). Drawing together neoliberalism and sport, the parallels become apparent:

“our idealised conceptions of sport and our conventional beliefs about democratic society share assumptions [...] guided by the belief that individuals are to be judged (and rewarded) not on the basis of any sociological characteristics but solely on the basis of their personal merit, hard work, and actual performance, their exercise of freedom within the parameters of the equal application of the law” (Hartmann, 2016, p. 55).

In other words, sport and neoliberalism are like two peas in a pod. They both value demonstrations of individual responsibility, discipline, and the acquisition of life skills such as ‘communication’ or ‘teamwork’. Similarly, they can both be understood as ‘regimes of truth’. Just like neoliberalism is largely normalised and considered a common-sense approach to life (Read, 2009), sport is uncritically evangelised and broadly thought of as inherently pure (Coakley, 2011b). The power of these regimes of truth is rooted in the widespread acceptance of sport evangelist and neoliberal ‘logics’. My participants (managers, coaches, and young people) uncritically bought into the neoliberal rhetoric of individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills with as much enthusiasm as they presumed sport *itself* was capable of social development.

Furthermore, neoliberal rhetoric situates socio-economically disadvantaged young people as ‘deficient’ and in need of ‘fixing’ (Brown, 2015; McNerney and Smyth, 2015). Sport also takes this approach towards disadvantaged young people by shaping interventions (like midnight leagues) which serve to ‘improve’ young people’s personhood (Donnelly and Coakley, 2002; Coakley, 2011b; Hartmann, 2016). Consequently, Spaaij (2009) suggests that the alignment of sport and neoliberal values situates sport as an ideal conduit through which to exercise neoliberal policies. This is what Lisa indicated when she stated that

“Because there are certain attributes that you get from sport, the leadership, the teamwork... you become a different type of character through sport” (Lisa).

Sport is an effective technology of neoliberal governmentality to re-shape young people’s personhood *because* sport values align with neoliberal values. By taking a deficit-reduction approach, SportHelp used sport to ‘help’ socio-economically disadvantaged young people become ‘better’, where ‘better’ meant internalising individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. In using sport as a technology of governmentality, the charity re-shaped how adolescents governed themselves. However,

the use of sport as a deficit-reduction approach has drawn criticism from a range of scholars (Spaaij, 2009; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom and Skille, 2014; Coakley, 2011b; Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011; Kelly, 2011). The core of these criticisms converges on an issue I have already discussed at length: deficit-reduction programmes focus on individualising the social. Social problems and contexts are reduced to the individual, who, to re-use Hartmann's (2016, p. 55) earlier words, is judged through SportHelp's programmes "on the basis of their personal merit, hard work, and actual performance". In doing so, the charity's youth sport programmes did not address wider structural inequalities; it aimed to 'fix' young people by 'plugging the gaps' in what SportHelp presumed would otherwise be 'impaired' development.

By using sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, SportHelp emphasised a form of personhood characterised by the 'entrepreneurial Self' (Kelly, 2006). This conception of 'good' personhood encompasses individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills; it is a form of citizenship built upon 'social values' (Rudd, 2005). This use of youth sport programmes is problematic because it champions 'patching-up' disadvantaged adolescents instead of striving for social justice. SportHelp's programmes aligned with Coakley's (2011b, p. 313) findings about youth sport programmes and positive development:

"Regardless of social class, positive development in most sport programs was not defined in terms of the need for social justice, rebuilding strong community-based social institutions, re-establishing the resource base of the communities where young people lived, or empowering young people to be effective agents of social change in their communities. Instead, development was defined in terms of providing socialization experiences that would maintain and extend opportunities for "privileged youth" or compensate for what was missing in the lives of "disadvantaged youth"."

The compensation "for what was missing in the lives of 'disadvantaged youth'" is what Coakley (2002, p. 16) refers to as the "social control and deficit-reduction dream". By preaching individual

responsibility, discipline, and life skills through sport, SportHelp aimed to ‘control’ young people from “chaotic backgrounds” (Dane). Married to this ‘social control dream’ is an attempt to mobilise young people’s aspirations to acquire life skills, with a view to fostering what Coakley (2002, p. 17) calls the “social opportunity and privilege promotion dream”. The premise here is that *if* young people internalise life skills such as ‘teamwork’ or ‘communication’ – which are valued by neoliberal society (Rudd, 2005) – they are likelier to make it into the labour market, thus becoming a ‘good’ neoliberal citizen (Siivonen and Brunila, 2014). However, I contend SportHelp predominantly (and unwittingly) fostered a “social control and deficit-reduction dream” given the extent to which the charity emphasised deficit-reduction in terms of individual responsibility and discipline.

In sum, the sport evangelist views espoused by SportHelp’s managers and coaches, which in turn took root in young people, were wedded to neoliberal values. As the physical embodiment of neoliberalism, sport operated as a technology of neoliberal governmentality which produced “certain outcomes in terms of human conduct” (Rose, 1996, p. 88): individual responsibility, discipline, and the acquisition of life skills. What makes sport a powerful vessel for neoliberal values is that both sport and neoliberalism can be considered ‘regimes of truth’ because their approaches towards establishing social order are treated as common-sense. It is ‘logical’ that competitive reward structures are the ‘best’ forms of allocating rewards and merit because they champion individual responsibility. Thus, the approaches of sport and neoliberalism are ‘logical’ ways to ‘help’ socio-economically disadvantaged young people by ‘fixing’ these youths’ assumed lack of individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills.

Harnessing the technology of sport: Coaches as neoliberal transformative leaders

Having looked at the commonalities between sport and neoliberal values, my focus now is to discuss how coaches ‘transformed’ young people’s personhood through the technology of sport. The coaches were the lynchpin of the charity: “as our CEO [Chief Executive Officer] continues to say, if it wasn’t

for the coaches we wouldn't be here, and we wouldn't have jobs" (Dane). Working at "the coalface" and "doing the hard graft" (Beatrice) meant these coaches' role was to deliver the charity's deficit-reduction programmes. Through sport, coaches were expected to re-shape young people into 'better' people and 'good' citizens who modelled individual responsibility, discipline, and appropriate life skills. As such, a SportHelp coach is not "just technically proficient at coaching and their sport [...] they are a mentor" (Beatrice). Similarly, the charity aimed to employ coaches who embodied the values of the SFG framework:

"We talk about influencing social skills, then we need people who are social role models. We talk about developing thinking or cognitive skills, then we need coaches who are skilled in emotion management, or cognitive management, who are intelligent as well to understand other people's mind sets, and how to influence them" (Dane).

Given SportHelp's emphasis on improving young people's lives, they were careful to avoid hiring "coaches that maybe see the organisation as... just elite" (Lisa). Nevertheless, the hiring of coaches and the assumptions of what coaches could achieve were imbued with sport evangelism. Because coaches had experience of playing sport at a high level, or had spent time coaching sport, implicitly meant they had acquired the values (individual responsibility, discipline, life skills) they were going to teach young people. Therefore, as a 'mentor' who had achieved 'good' personhood, the figure of the sports coach represented the 'saviour' who could 'transform' young people from 'deficient' adolescents into 'good' citizens using the technology of sport. As such, both the SportHelp managers and coaches agreed on the role of the coach as a 'transformative leader' (Morgan and Bush, 2016).

Transformative leadership should not be confused with transformational leadership. Transformative leadership is concerned with "social betterment, enhanced equity, and a reshaping of dominant knowledge and belief structures" (Morgan and Bush, 2016, p. 763), whilst transformational

leadership aims to “inspire followers [...] by transcending their own self-interest for the betterment of the team or organisation” (Arthur et al., 2011, p. 4). My interest lies in transformative leadership because SportHelp coaches, using the technology of sport, aimed for ‘social betterment’ and improving young people’s personhood. Contrarily, transformational leadership generally focuses on a narrower goal than ‘social betterment’: enhancing performance within a team or organisation (Stenling and Tafvelin, 2014).

The link between SportHelp coaches and transformative leadership, as described by Morgan and Bush (2016), is not immediately obvious. Emphasising individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills seems at odds with promoting “enhanced equity” and reshaping dominant knowledge structures. To address this dissonance, it is necessary to first engage with a more in-depth definition of transformative leadership:

“[Transformative leadership] Begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others. Transformative leadership, therefore, inextricably links education and educational leadership with the wider social context within which it is embedded” (Shields, 2010, p. 559).

The gulf between SportHelp coaches and transformative leadership, if anything, now seems wider. This is because SportHelp coaches, when using the technology of sport, did not act as transformative leaders; they adopted the role of *neoliberal* transformative leaders. In the same way that neoliberalism co-opts everyday understandings and re-sculpts them in the image of the free market paradigm⁸⁹, Shields’ (2010) notion of transformative leadership was re-configured – hijacked – by neoliberal values. In turn, this enabled the coaches to harness the power of sport as a technology of

⁸⁹ For instance, that it is in the *nature* of human beings to operate as ‘enterprises’ in relation to the free market paradigm (Read, 2009).

neoliberal governmentality to promote individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. By outlining Shield's (2004) four criteria of transformative leadership, I will illustrate how neoliberalism has re-sculpted the meaning of transformative leadership.

Shields (2004) suggests transformative leadership occurs when a system of education is "just, democratic, empathic, and optimistic" (p. 124). By just, she refers to programmes available for all young people which serve to meet their "cultural, social, and academic needs" (p. 124). Democratic education "requires empowering children to participate in, and take responsibility for, their own learning" (p. 124), whilst empathic education highlights the value of care and meaningful human relationships. Lastly, by optimistic, Shields suggests education should enable young people to look positively towards the future by opening "windows of understanding and doors of opportunity for all children" (p. 125).

SportHelp coaches fulfilled Shields' (2004) four criteria, albeit under the auspices of neoliberal governmentality. One the first point, just values (meeting "cultural, social, and academic needs"), coaches addressed cultural and social needs by 'fixing' what socio-economically disadvantaged young people were perceived to lack culturally and socially: access to a mentor who 'taught' them that cultural and social engagement entails internalising individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. Coaches also aimed to meet young people's academic needs by intimating that the acquisition of such a trio of attributes results in enhancing one's academics. Twinned with this was how some coaches (like Vincent and Karl) would spend time in young people's classes to ensure they were 'on task' by modelling such attributes. Thus, "cultural, social, and academic needs" were underpinned by neoliberal values.

Secondly, Shields' (2004) vision for a democratic education was re-formulated into a democratic *neoliberal* education. Under a democratic education, what is 'right' "requires teaching people how to participate, making them feel comfortable, and empowering them to feel competent and capable" (p. 124). SportHelp coaches encouraged participation, comfort, and empowerment *within a neoliberal system*. Young people learned that participation and comfort in the neoliberal regime is underscored by

comfort with being an entrepreneur of the self (Kelly, 2006) by demonstrating individual responsibility and discipline. Consequently, empowerment is not about highlighting and contesting the “rules of power” (Shields, 2004, p. 124); empowerment consists in strengthening a young person’s candidature to the free market’s ‘jungle law’ (Peck and Tickell, 2012). Therefore, in the eyes of a *neoliberal* democratic education, what is ‘right’ is for the SportHelp coach to *prepare* youths for the labour market.

The final two aspects of Shields’ (2004) conceptualisation of transformative leadership are empathy and opportunity. The first refers to caring relationships (which the coaches certainly engaged in – a point I will expand upon later in the chapter) and offering education opportunities to disadvantaged young people (which the coaches complied with given that is SportHelp’s remit as a charity). However, once again, both care and opportunity were re-configured according to neoliberal governmentality. The extent to which coaches cared for young people depended on the extent to which adolescents internalised individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. Likewise, the opportunity to participate in SportHelp programmes was available to all young people in each SportHelp school, but the extent to which young people remained welcome on the programmes depended on whether they internalised individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills⁹⁰.

Thus, SportHelp managers and coaches understood the role of the coach as a transformative leader who ‘fixed’ young people’s ‘deficiencies’ by re-shaping their personhood in accordance to a neoliberal ethos. As neoliberal transformative leaders, coaches fostered neoliberal values (instead of ‘just’ values), a neoliberal democratic education (where ‘empowerment’ is synonymous with developing stronger credentials for survival in the ‘jungle law’), and offered both care and opportunity *as long as* young people demonstrated individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. This is how SportHelp

⁹⁰ Recall how Orange suggested Coach Vincent is cautious with who he encourages to keep attending his sessions: “The second it starts to become an actual distraction to us [...] he won’t like, concentrate on them. He won’t say ‘come to training’”

coaches harnessed sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality; it is how they re-shaped young people's notions of personhood.

SportHelp coaches could embody the role of a transformative leader *because* of the breadth of what the coaching role entails. Whilst Beatrice alluded to this by describing SportHelp coaches as being “more than just a great sports coach”, the coaching literature over the last decade has increasingly called for a more holistic understanding of what a sports coach *is* (Jones, 2006; Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2009). This growing body of work examines the role of the coach as an educator, counsellor, mentor, social worker, taxi service, confidant and a great deal more; in other words, it situates coaches as ‘bricoleurs’ (Bush and Silk, 2010; Bush et al., 2013). SportHelp coaches certainly encompassed all these roles, and that breadth is what enabled them to operate as transformative leaders. As Coach Alfred clarified,

“I hate to be called [...] a teacher. I’m not a teacher. I manage technique, I manage emotions, I manage these skills... I’m quite a manager, you know” (Alfred).

Though Jones (2006) and Bush et al. (2013) would probably disagree with Alfred's description of himself as “not a teacher”, Alfred's quote illustrates the value of understanding the figure of the sports coach as a ‘bricoleur’ at the intersection of many spheres of society. By being a teacher, counsellor, mentor, carer, taxi service and much more, coaches could have a broader impact on young people's lives. Twinned with how SportHelp coaches were based in a school, and saw young people throughout the day in a range of structured and unstructured spaces (sport sessions and lunch times, respectively), meant young people had a *constant* exposure to their coaches and their ‘teachings’.

Therefore, coaches harnessed the neoliberal technology of sport by acting as neoliberal transformative leaders who re-shaped young people's notions of personhood. By fostering individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills, neoliberal transformative leadership ‘hijacked’ the tenets of transformative leadership and re-configured them. Re-invoking Morgan and Bush's (2016, p. 763)

conceptualisation of transformative leadership as being “concerned with social betterment, enhanced equity and a reshaping of dominant knowledge and belief structures”, I have illustrated how ‘social betterment’ consisted in maximising a young person’s candidature to the free-market by re-shaping their personhood. Similarly, enhancing equity was treated in a deficit-reduction manner: it entailed ‘plugging the gaps’ in socio-economically disadvantaged young people’s lives to maximise their chances of accessing the free market. Lastly, reshaping dominant knowledge and belief structures entailed individualising the social; young people learned to dispel the ‘belief structure’ that their context was an ‘excuse’ for poor behaviour. Young people’s personhood was re-shaped according to individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills.

“War minus the shooting”: Sport and aggression

Having examined how coaches used sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality by acting as neoliberal transformative leaders, my aim here is to illustrate how coaches promoted resilience as a further practice of a deficit-reduction approach. Coach Jake frequently reminded Carys and Mitch that they had to be more aggressive if they wanted to win given champions are “aggressive, they do not give anything to anyone”. When both Carys and Mitch attempted to resist their coach’s teachings (by saying they liked “being nice” or they were not aggressive people), Jake would remind them that “sport is aggressive”. Coach Karl liked to repeat to his players that “you should never show weakness to your opponents, ever”, whilst Coach Vincent often told his team that “you guys need to become tougher” and that “until you use your voices, nobody is going to be scared to play against you”.

Aggression, as an aspect of playing sport, is well-documented (Camiré and Trudel, 2010; Gardner and Janelle, 2002; Fullinwider, 2006; Rudd, 2008). However, aggression was not about transforming young people into raging beasts⁹¹. Instead,

“... aggressiveness was not always perceived to be a negative attribute as many athletes reported it was a proactive assertive behaviour, the intent not being to harm an opponent but to be unwavering in a task.” (Camiré and Trudel, 2010, pp. 201-202).

Being ‘unwavering in task’ constitutes ‘resilience’: “a neoliberal form of governmentality that places emphasis on individual adaptability” (Joseph, 2013, p. 38). Resilience is associated to individual responsibility because there is an emphasis on the young people to ‘bounce back’ from any situation and be ‘unwavering in a task’. Whilst individual responsibility stresses one should take ownership for one’s own learning and life, resilience encourages a dogged pursuit of embracing this ownership. As Rose and Lentzos (2016) suggest, “absolute security is impossible. We will experience adversity, although we cannot accurately predict when, how and in what form” (p. 36). Resilience is about young people adapting to this adversity (Welsh, 2014), even if the adversity stems from the ‘deficiencies’ of being socio-economically disadvantaged. Recalling Karl’s earlier words (“never show weakness to your opponents, ever”), Vincent’s reminder “you guys need to toughen up”, and Jake’s “sport is aggressive”, we can see how these ideas encourage young people to re-shape themselves as competitive beings who must ‘fight’ to survive within the neoliberal ‘jungle law’ (Peck and Tickell, 2012). It is no surprise that coaches’ calls for aggression and perseverance came during moments where competition and high performance was stressed. As I explained in the previous section, sport values and neoliberal values align in envisaging competitive

⁹¹ Coach Jake specifically outlined that part of the SportHelp ethos is that “if we see they [a young person] have a strong temperament, we need to try to change that attitude”.

reward structures as suitable systems for the distribution of merit. Those who demonstrate individual responsibility, discipline, life skills, and resilience are considered ‘better’ people.

In addition to how resilience – like individual responsibility – individualises the social, it can also have an unintended effect on how a youths’ personhood is re-configured:

“I remember, sometimes I just shout at people. They understand. If I shouted at someone random, like a friend, maybe, I shouted, they might be like ‘hey, why are you shouting at me?’ but then, in basketball, when I shout at someone, they understand why I am shouting at them” (Fish).

Fish articulates a ‘logic’ whereby shouting at people in sport is acceptable, but doing so outside of sport may not be tolerable. In other words, the technology of sport encourages young people to learn that aggression, as part of competing ‘to win’, is *acceptable*. Though this was not the case for all young people (such as Carys and Mitch⁹²), and despite Fish suggesting there was a difference between ‘sport’ and ‘life outside sport’, aggression can nonetheless be *internalised* through sport practices. This particularly happened in the case of the coaches who, during moments of high competition, modelled behaviours they would have deemed unacceptable had a young person performed them.

When I observed Karl’s and Vincent’s teams play matches, both coaches deployed frustrated and dejected body language signs when their respective players made mistakes. At one point, another SportHelp coach (whose team was playing against Karl’s in what Karl called a “game for development”) jumped off the bench and bellowed at his player “what is wrong with you?! Why would you do that?!” in response to an adolescent’s on-court mistake. Furthermore, Karl and Vincent also fleetingly engaged in what I would describe as disrespectful (or at the very least, undermining) exchanges with the referees, who were young people from the coaches’ clubs. These interactions took place when the coaches disagreed with game-related decisions, and would probably be waved away as ‘sports banter’ or ‘locker-

⁹² Who repeatedly described themselves as ‘not being aggressive people’.

room talk'. These terms refer to forms of communication which are unacceptable in most walks of life yet are condoned in sport contexts (Roper, 2017), such as when Vincent 'jokingly' exclaimed "8 seconds my ass!" or "remind me to kick your head in later!" to one of the adolescent referees. In addition to (at times) shouting at his players for repeatedly making mistakes, Vincent also once kicked a basketball that a young person was bouncing. Fish clarified the issue for me in a matter-of-fact way: the young person should have known better and should not have been bouncing the ball during a team huddle.

Young people did not react in shock to these behaviours. They reacted as if these behaviours were commonplace; as if they were *natural*. When the coaches acted as I have described above, they did so *automatically* and *unconsciously*. This is the power of sport as a 'regime of truth': it results in the uncritical acceptance and proliferation of certain practices. The implications of these coaches' behaviours for re-shaping young people's personhood are intriguing, and particularly resonate with resilience and discipline. Resilience, in that young people were expected to 'bounce back' from them, to become 'tougher'. Discipline, in that young people were supposed to demonstrate self-control regardless of how their coach acted:

"I mean, from training I've learnt to keep myself calm. When coach shouts at me, like, if I wasn't disciplined, I'd probably shout back. I knew someone that did" (Orange).

Therefore, through the neoliberal technology of sport, young people 'learned' that a 'good' person does not just demonstrate individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills; they are also resilient. This resilience serves to accentuate a form of personhood which individualises the social, whereby the stressors in socio-economically disadvantaged young people's lives can be addressed individually by 'toughening up'. Furthermore, the way coaches unwittingly modelled behaviours which they would not have tolerated in young people, and that young people *accepted* such behaviours uncritically, illustrates

how neoliberal governmentality re-shaped young people into disciplined – docile and self-controlling – adolescents.

Passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging: The power of non-formal education

The fourth part of this chapter focuses on exploring how the realm of non-formal education SportHelp operated in served as a fertile ground for socio-economically disadvantaged young people to internalise individual responsibility, discipline, and specific life skills. An element of this receptiveness is probably that the coaches' neoliberal teachings aligned with the rhetoric and broader educational aims of the neoliberal society the adolescents were familiar with:

“To help learners acquire skills, abilities, and dispositions that make them adaptive workers equipped psychologically to meet the ever-changing demands of neoliberal flexible capitalism”
Sugarman (2015, p. 114).

Though I would guess the young people's school teachers had similar aims to the coaches – to prepare young people for neoliberal society⁹³ – young people perceived their teachers as being different to their coaches. As I illustrate in this section, young people generally *wanted* to learn from their coaches, they *wanted* to spend time with their coaches. Contrarily, teachers were largely perceived as strict or unfriendly; young people had little desire to learn from them, or spend time with them. SportHelp attributed this difference in perception to the *nature* of the 'teacher' versus 'coach' role:

⁹³ I did not gather data unto this end, hence why it is a well-educated guess.

“[Young people] have a different relationship with participants at a school than a teacher. It’s a different dynamic, the fact that they are called ‘coach’ instead of ‘Mr. this’ or ‘Mrs. that’, is a different dynamic between them and the young people that play sport with them” (Beatrice).

My data does not support this thesis which groups teachers as inherently ‘bad’ and coaches as inherently ‘good’. Certainly, young people fleetingly reflected on some of the teachers they liked, and, when they did, what made them appreciate their teachers was exactly what made youths like their coaches: passion, caring relationships, and a sense of belonging. Young people positively perceived the coaches and teachers who could foster those three domains by meeting adolescents’ needs. However, given teachers are hamstrung by the formal education system, with its standardised performance indicators, OFSTED ratings, and ‘teaching to the test’ (Carr, 2016b), there is little time to foster passion, caring relationships, or a sense of belonging. Contrarily, non-formal education, with its emphasis on flexibility, less hierarchical structures, and relationships (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974; Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi, 2015), is *ideally* placed to meet youth’s needs (Souto-Otero, 2016). In turn, this leads to the flourishing of passion, caring relationships, and a sense of belonging.

In what follows, I outline how SportHelp coaches met young people’s needs and promoted passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging. In doing so, I suggest non-formal education operated as an effective space for the internalisation of neoliberal notions of personhood, delivered through the technology of sport. Furthermore, I argue that neoliberalism, in the same way as it ‘co-opted’ the meaning of transformative leadership, also ‘corroded’ what constitutes ‘care’ and a ‘sense of belonging’.

Caring relationships: Meeting the needs of relationships and physical and psychological safety

At the heart of non-formal education is the development of meaningful human relationships (Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi, 2015; Morgan, Morgan and Kelly, 2008). Considering youth sport programmes are frequently deployed as non-formal activities, it comes as no surprise that the formation of meaningful

relationships has been repeatedly documented as one of the pivotal components of such programmes (Coalter, 2012; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom and Skille, 2014; Kay, 2009; Petitpas et al., 2005; Spaaij, 2012). Though the lens through which these relationships has been studied varies⁹⁴, I focus on Noddings' (1984) concept of care to illustrate how the coaches met young people's needs for relationships, and physical and psychological safety, through caring relationships. I will also argue how this form of care has been 'hijacked' by neoliberal values and been re-formulated into *neoliberal* care.

For Noddings (2007), care is a genuine and spontaneous behaviour whereby "the motive to care in many situations arises on its own; it does not have to be summoned" (p. 222). This form of care is underpinned by three characteristics: engrossment, action, and reciprocity (Noddings, 1984). This trio of elements were frequently on display during coach-young person interactions, and were also noticeable in how coaches spoke about young people, and vice versa.

Engrossment is the "desire for the other's well-being" (Noddings, 1984, p. 19). It entails the one-caring immersing themselves in the cared-for's life, and taking a genuine interest in the cared-for's existence. The coaches frequently demonstrated engrossment by wanting to become close to the adolescents and showing a desire to forge meaningful relationships. Alfred described it as "they [young people] don't work for me, I work for them", whilst Karl reminded his players that "as long as SportHelp keep me here, I'm going to stay – I'm loyal like that". Jake confided in me how he hoped that the young people always knew that he always made decisions with their best interests at heart. The coaches prided themselves on their willingness to help young people, even if that just meant listening to their problems: "I know a lot of the situations that the only thing you need is somebody to listen to you" (Alfred). Young people appreciated their coaches demonstrating engrossment, and identified it as one of the core differences between coaches and teachers. Fish remarked how "I can tell coach wants me to succeed";

⁹⁴ Coalter (2012) emphasises respect, trust, and reciprocity whilst Jones and Deutsch (2011) prioritise minimising relational distance, fostering active inclusion, and paying attention to proximal relational ties.

Orange described Coach Vincent as “a mentor and a friend”; and H. learned to be a “good man” from Coach Karl. Carys outlined Jake’s level of engrossment by saying:

“Some teachers, they just don’t care as much. Some are ‘you respect me, I teach you’ sort of thing. It wasn’t ‘you respect me, I respect you’, it was ‘respect me, I teach you. That’s it’. (Carys).

Closely tied to engrossment is Noddings’ (1984) second component of care: action. By this, she means that the purpose of caring action is “not to achieve for ourselves a particular commendation but to protect or enhance the welfare of the cared-for” (p. 24). Genuine care is not fuelled by the hope of a pay-check, nor the desire to be publicly credited for caring. Coaches fulfilled the component of ‘action’ by making time to talk and listen to the young people, or by devoting considerable amounts of their day (including weekends) to training sessions and matches⁹⁵. Furthermore, Vincent and Karl gave up their time to sit in lessons and support specific young people who were struggling academically. Vincent indicated that it is an approach whereby “if they [young people] don’t want to play, we have other ways of helping them”. Similarly, Karl described sitting in classes as “my favourite part of what I do at the moment because I am getting good results”. As a consequence of coaches demonstrating ‘action’, young people once again saw them differently to their teachers. Orange outlined how “Coach... he will do things out of his own time. Teachers are always getting paid”. Similarly, Carys’ devotion for Coach Jake soared when she realised the multitude of times “he didn’t have to be here [...] it put a lot of respect for Jake. He put us first”. Though the adolescents understood their coaches got paid for their job, they felt their coaches were not in it for the money; they felt their coaches went above and beyond because they *cared* for the youths.

Noddings’ (1984, p. 74) third and final element of care is reciprocity:

⁹⁵ It’s worth remembering most coaches left their houses around 5.30-6.00am and returned between 6 and 7pm. Their energy and passion was palpable, and there was an intangible joy attached to their job.

“What the cared-for gives to the relation either in direct response to the one-caring or in personal delight or in happy growth before her [the one-caring’s] eyes.”

Reciprocity does not mean the one-caring and the cared-for must distribute the ‘caring’ load equally; it is not an exchange of equal-value gifts. Reciprocity is about enabling the unconstrained and spontaneous reaction by the cared-for to the one-caring’s actions⁹⁶. Young people showed reciprocity in terms of ‘happy growth’: “they [young people] like being here, they see a purpose to being hear” (Coach Alfred). Echoing that sentiment, Karl remarked how “everyone loves to play the game” and how “funny enough, the kids that some of teachers think are nightmares, I think are angels when they come to my sessions”. Vincent concurred, outlining how SportHelp young people “want to be here, they are committed to be here, they enjoy being here”. In turn, young people *wanted* to show their affection for their coach’s care. They did so by eulogising their coaches when they spoke of them as ‘mentors’, ‘friends’, and pivotal figures in their lives who had developed their personhood and helped them become better people.

In addition to developing engrossment, action, and reciprocity, relationships between coaches and young people flourished given coaches acted – to an extent – as pseudo-attachment figures. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) posits that young people’s views of themselves and the world (for instance, ‘am I worthy of being loved?’) hinge on the quality of relationships with primary caregivers (often, parents). The role of coaches as attachment figures has been tentatively explored (Felton and Jowett, 2013), and suggests that coaches *may* be able to emulate *some* aspects of a primary caregiver. Young people outlined their coaches as central figures in their lives given “he’s been there more for me than my actual dad has been” (Orange), “he’s almost like a third parent [...] like my uncle or something”

⁹⁶ A simple way of understanding this is through an analogy whereby a father surprises his 6-year-old daughter with a trip to Disneyland. Though the 6-year-old cannot orchestrate and fund a surprise trip to Cancun for her father in return, she can demonstrate reciprocity by expressing unabashed joy at visiting Disneyland.

(Carys), and “he’s changed my life [...] if it wasn’t for him, I don’t know where I’d be” (Fish). Nevertheless, we should be cautious when likening coaches to parents, which is why I used the term pseudo-attachment figure. An attachment bond to a primary caregiver is both powerful and rare, making it hard to replicate. As Tia pointed out, “you can’t say your coach and your parents are similar, you can’t say they’re on the same level, cos that’s ridiculous!”

Through a combination of care (engrossment, action, reciprocity) and coaches as pseudo-attachment figures, young people’s needs for relationships were fulfilled. The knock-on effect of adolescents enjoying nurturing relationships (Larson et al., 2002) and knowing they could call upon their coaches during moments of emotional or physical turmoil (Carr, 2011) resulted in meeting youth’s needs for physical and psychological safety. Young people felt their coaches (and the youth sport sessions) acted as a buffer against physical or psychological abuse (Fattore, Mason and Watson, 2007; Sinclair and Little, 2002); it was a ‘safe space’. However, whilst coaches certainly cared for young people, there was a condition young people had to fulfil to continue receiving this care and have these needs met: they had to internalise the coaches’ ‘teachings’ of individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills.

For Noddings’ (1984), care is unconditional and is neither prescriptive nor measurable. Though coaches offered engrossment, action, and reciprocity, the extent to which care continued to be provided *depended* on a young person’s internalisation of individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. Care was offered with greater enthusiasm to those young people whose ‘happy growth’ consisted in re-shaping their personhood to conform to neoliberal forms of governmentality. Fish outlined how Coach Vincent “he avoids trouble. If you wanna go training, go training and stay committed”. Likewise, Orange indicated how “the second it [a young person’s misbehaviour] starts to become an actual distraction [...] he won’t, like, concentrate on them”. Previously, I mentioned how Coach Jake was considering dropping Gustav from the table tennis programme as a result of Gustav’s limited progress in his attitude and willingness to

improve. Lastly, Karl described how one of the young people who eventually dropped out of school, whom he tried to help, fundamentally “just didn’t want to help himself”.

Therefore, care was corroded by neoliberal values and re-formulated into *neoliberal* care. In line with the charity’s deficit-reduction approach, young people came to realise that coaches cared for those youths who tried to ‘fix’ their ‘deficiencies’ and become ‘better’ people. This means neoliberal care addressed the human needs of relationships and physical and psychological safety *for those adolescents who internalised individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills*. By implication, when coaches acted as pseudo-attachment figures, the message communicated to adolescents was, essentially, ‘you are a human being worthy of care *as long as you conduct yourself appropriately*’. ‘Appropriately’ was denoted by the values of neoliberal governmentality, and received positive re-enforcement by young people appreciating how the quality of their relationship with their coach *soared* the more they demonstrated neoliberal ‘happy growth’:

“Fish here, coach really likes him, because he’s always organised, he’s a good kid, most of the time, and he might have an off day once or twice. But there are certain kids who are, like, part of the team... they don’t really learn from their mistakes, they’ll just keep doing the same thing over and over, and that’s why he has a closer relationship to me and Fish to some other people” (Orange).

Consequently, through caring relationships, young people’s notions of personhood were re-sculpted. ‘Good’ citizens (who demonstrated individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills) were ‘worthy’ of care, whilst those who failed to make the ‘right choices’ did not ‘deserve’ it.

Sense of belonging: Meeting the needs of stable structures and a sense of belonging

As a provider of non-formal education, SportHelp programmes instilled a sense of belonging in the young people the charity worked with. This sense of belonging flourished from SportHelp meeting adolescents' needs for stable structures and a sense of belonging. However, as I illustrated in the previous section about care, neoliberal values co-opted the meaning of 'stable structures' and how young people were expected to behave in order to feel like they belonged in the sport sessions. Despite this, SportHelp adolescents demonstrated an overwhelming sense of belonging. Carys spoke about how table tennis helped her find her place during the process of settling into her current school, similar to how Mitch had established a good friendship network through table tennis. Tia depicted the atmosphere of her basketball sessions in terms of a "family", whilst Fish described his teammates as "brothers". These data reflect Lisa's observation that "you can see it in their [young people's] faces, they just want to be a part of something. I don't think that's a crime, to want to be a part of something".

To instil this sense of belonging, SportHelp met young people's needs for stable structures: programmes with clear limits which are consistently enforced (Quinn, 1999). Considered one of the bases of effective youth programmes (Little, Wimer and Weiss, 2007; Mahoney et al., 2005), stable structures provide predictive routines, rewards, and punishments (Evans et al., 2005). To this end, Vincent liked to "lay out what my expectations are" before he starting working with young people. This enabled him to administer rewards and punishments (like game bans) in relation to such expectations. When I probed Coach Vincent regarding whether he would still bench his best players when they misbehaved on the eve of a big match, he reiterated the importance of stable structures: "you cannot give them [young people] an inch of inconsistency". Coach Karl enforced a predictable environment through expectations of commitment. When he lost his court due to summer exam scheduling, he expected young people to still come to fitness sessions in the dance studio (his replacement 'court'). Those who came would be

rewarded with priority on the basketball court when it was available again, whereas the others “have to earn their spot back into the sports hall”.

The foundation of the coaches’ stable structures were individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. Rewards and punishments were administered *in relation* to that trio of expectations. Not keeping up with one’s work (not showing individual responsibility), misbehaving (not showing disciplinary, self-control), or not developing communication skills (as was the case with Gustav and Coach Jake) constituted infringing expectations. This is what prompted Tia to behave in class, and what stopped Orange from shouting back at his coach when his coach shouted at him. Therefore, whilst stable structures have been theorised to enhance psycho-social well-being (Evans et al., 2005; Lee and Walsh, 2004) on the basis that operating in an unpredictable environment is stressful, such structures can also lead to conformity and docility (Foucault, 1977). This is how SportHelp simultaneously met young people’s needs for stable structures, whilst using the ‘rules’ attached to the stable structure to emphasise neoliberal values of responsibility, discipline, and life skills.

In addition to meeting young people’s needs for stable structures, SportHelp also addressed youth’s needs for a sense of belonging. Considered an important component of young people’s development (Barton, Watkins and Jarjoura, 1997; Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Fraser-Thomas, Côté and Deakin, 2005), a ‘sense of belonging’ entails ensuring young people “felt needed” (Quinn, 1999, p. 104) as valuable members of a society (Konopka, 1973). Furthermore, a sense of belonging is rooted in the development of strong and stable relationships (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Beyond the coach-young person relationships already discussed, young people formed meaningful friendship networks. Dane suggested the youths who join the charity want “to have meaningful relationships which are not negative” whilst Lisa (as I quoted her earlier) stated that “you can see it in their faces, they just want to be part of something”.

The young people echoed Dane and Lisa's views. For Mitch, table tennis represented "being a part of something big, also playing with my friends". Fish said "I have made close friends. They are like brothers to me now", whilst Tia added how "coach makes us a family". The centrality of developing these relationships is compounded by the care provided by coaches, and how the coaches acted as pseudo-attachment figures. Thus, the access to stable structures (SportHelp sessions) whereby meaningful relationships could be developed (amongst coaches and young people) fostered a powerful sense of belonging. In turn, and in accordance with Lambert et al. (2013), this sense of belonging bolstered adolescents' meaning in life. They felt they had a purpose, as Coach Alfred put it: "they like being here, they see a purpose to being here".

My observations indicated the extent to which young people enjoyed belonging to SportHelp programmes. They *wanted* to attend sessions, practice a sport they enjoyed, alongside people they liked. Young people felt they belonged. This resonates with Coach Vincent's reflections about behaviour problems rarely being an issue for him (young people "want to be there"), akin to Coach Karl suggesting that "the kids some teachers think are nightmares, I think are angels when they come to my sessions". Alfred recounted a conversation he had with one his students, diagnosed with autism:

"I asked him, I think, in January... he was speaking a little bit more. I asked him, why you never miss a day? You never miss a lunch club. Why? He said 'it's the only thing that I feel I am part of something'" (Alfred).

Just like the expectations SportHelp attached to their stable structures encouraged young people to re-shape their personhood in terms of individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills, meeting youth's need for a sense of belonging achieved the same goal. Baumeister and Leary (1995, p. 505) contend that

“Concern with belongingness appears to be a powerful factor shaping human thought. People interpret situations and events with regard to their implication for relationships.”

This suggests that young people understood the parameters which led to their ‘sense of belonging’. As I have illustrated throughout this chapter, they knew that attitudes and behaviours which deviated from individual responsibility and discipline resulted in punishment or exclusion for the programme. Therefore, to retain their sense of belonging, to continue having access to the ‘family’ Tia spoke of, or the ‘brotherhood’ Fish referred to, adolescents internalised the coaches’ teachings which re-shaped ‘human thought’. Once again, this is how a non-formal education space encouraged the internalisation of neoliberal values. Young people *wanted* to belong to the sport sessions, and they *felt* they belonged⁹⁷ – it was not a bond they generally wished to sever. As such, they were keen to adhere to the ‘rules’ of the stable structure since that permitted them to keep returning to the charity’s sessions. In sum, alongside meeting young people’s needs for stable structures and a sense of belonging, neoliberal governmentality re-configured how these needs were met to emphasise SportHelp’s deficit-reduction approach. Disadvantaged youths learned that a ‘good’ stable structure is an environment where one demonstrates individual responsibility, docility (as discipline), and strives to acquire life skills. Likewise, to feel a sense of belonging and be ‘valuable’, one should also demonstrate those three neoliberal traits.

⁹⁷ I was unable to talk to those young people on the periphery of the programmes, and doing so would have shed further insights into the acceptance of neoliberal values to re-shape personhood. Those who were on the fringes of the programme were there partly because they were not as devoted to the sport, or because they kept getting into trouble (and thus not abiding by individual responsibility and discipline).

Passion: Meeting the needs of autonomy, competence, and relationships

The third way in which SportHelp programmes, as a type of non-formal education, met young people's needs for autonomy, competence, and relationships, was through fostering young people's passion. As I have illustrated in the sections about caring relationships and a sense of belonging, adolescents *wanted* to attend sport sessions, and they *wanted* to remain in them, which meant *wanting* to internalise the 'teachings' and expectations outlined by their coaches. Though young people certainly enjoyed the relationships with their coaches and feeling like they belonged, their activity of choice – their sport – was the 'hook' that often encouraged them to join the programme (Sherry, Schulenkorf and Chalip, 2015). In turn, passion for their sport stimulated their continuity within SportHelp⁹⁸. Passion, according to Vallerand et al. (2003, p. 756), is defined as

“A strong inclination towards an activity that people like, that they find important, and in which they invest energy and time”

These authors identify two forms of passion (harmonious and obsessive), and distinguish them according to how “the passionate activity is internalised into one's core self or identity” (p. 757). Harmonious passion refers to an autonomous internalisation, whereby the love for an activity is fuelled by nothing else than the desire to participate in the activity. Contrarily, obsessive passion occurs when the thrust to participate in an activity is rooted in a form of inter- or intra-personal pressure, such as the desire to seek social acceptance. Its hallmark is a person's lack of control over the activity, resulting in conflict between such an activity and the rest of a person's life (Vallerand, 2008)⁹⁹. Young people's love for their sports aligned with harmonious passion; Fish indicated that “basketball, it seemed really

⁹⁸ During one of my conversations with Coach Jake, he told me how his school had referred three young people with behavioural difficulties to his table tennis sessions. Whilst two were doing well because they liked the sport, the third did not. Jake gesticulated in frustration at this point, and wondered what 'magic' the school expected him work if the young person did not like table tennis in the first place.

⁹⁹ Athletes who are compulsive over each detail of their lives are examples of obsessive passion.

different. I don't know, I just felt it in me" whilst H. described basketball as "it's a different story, I don't get bored with it at all, I've played two years straight, and it doesn't get boring". Mitch, speaking about table tennis, said "I decided to put most of my time into this, and um, cos, I just... enjoy it".

For harmonious passion to flourish in the SportHelp adolescents, Vallerand (2008) suggests a trio of conditions must be satisfied. In relation to my study, these are choice over what sport to play, awarding a substantial amount of subjective value to the sport, and internalising the activity as something adolescents *want* to do, instead of *have* to do. Orange and Tia captured these three points by saying:

"Yeah, like no one has passion and stuff for the game, and stuff, you know what I mean? Like there's people... we wake up at 6, and, we do something productive, instead, I have some friends who will wake up at 6 to do their make up for two hours before school. When they ask me what's the point of going training, I ask them what's the point of doing make up for two hours? It's just a waste" (Orange).

"That's the only reason. If they [other young people] don't love it, they wouldn't continue to play, and they wouldn't come to morning trainings, 7:30 to 8:30... it's ridiculous but... if you don't like the sport, then you won't do it. You won't really care about it. Putting your hours, your time, into something you don't really like..." (Tia).

Underlying Orange's and Tia's quotes is the fulfilment of three needs: autonomy, competence, and relationships. Autonomy is concerned with a young person's power to determine their life choices (Fattore, Mason and Watson, 2007), whereas competence is tied to Bandura's (1997) notion of self-efficacy, and can be broadly summarised as 'I feel I can do this activity'. Finally, the need for relationships – as I have already discussed at length – can be synthesized as "quality time with caring adults and other young people" (Quinn, 1999, p. 97). The combination of these needs has been theorised by Ryan and Deci

(2000) to be more powerful than just the sum of their parts: the extent to which the trio is met conditions a person's motivation.

Autonomy, competence and relatedness have been conceptualised as universal, basic human needs within self-determination theory, a macro-theory of human motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2008). By addressing autonomy (I feel I can do what I want to do), competence (I feel I can perform this activity) and relatedness (I can make meaningful relationships), human beings achieve intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000), whereby the point of doing the activity is simply to perform the activity. This aligns with Vallerand et al.'s (2003) notion of harmonious passion: the love for an activity is fuelled by the desire to participate in the activity. When the basic needs of autonomy, competence, or relatedness are compromised, a person's motivation shifts from *intrinsic* to *extrinsic*: "the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome" (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 71). This is reflected in young people's negative perceptions of their teachers: they did not *want* to go to class, they felt they *had* to go to class. Their need for autonomy had been compromised. In turn, a severe compromise in autonomy, competence, and relatedness is likely to move beyond extrinsic motivation and result in *amotivation*, or a total lack of passion (Vallerand, 2008).

Revisiting the young people's quotes in this section through the lenses of passion and self-determination theory, we can appreciate how the fulfilment of the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness resulted in harmonious passion and intrinsic motivation flourishing. Subsequently, this process encouraged young people to internalise individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills as the values upon which they should re-sculpt their personhood:

"When the object of interest is highly valued and meaningful, one is inclined to internalise the valued object, to make it part of him- or herself." (Vallerand et al., 2006, p. 458).

Considering “passions become central features of one’s identity and serve to define a person” (Vallerand et al., 2003, p. 757), such as a ‘basketball player’ or ‘guitar player’, it is important to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all of what it *means* to be a ‘basketball player’. The SportHelp young people certainly identified according to the sport they played¹⁰⁰, but their conduct as basketball and table tennis players was *shaped* by the SportHelp ethos. Thus, harmonious passion for a sport encouraged adolescents to absorb the values promoted within SportHelp sessions: individual responsibility, discipline, and the acquisition of specific life skills. They were not ‘just’ a ‘basketball player’; they were a ‘basketball player who internalised a form of personhood tied to neoliberal governmentality’. Therefore, unlike the bulk of unappealing formal education environments young people experienced, SportHelp offered young people an alternative space (non-formal education) where they could pursue a passion; in turn meeting youth’s needs for autonomy, competence, and relationships. This made young people *want* to attend SportHelp session, and *want* to internalise the personhood-altering ‘teachings’ of their coaches.

The bigger picture: Re-shaping personhood by individualising the social

Throughout this chapter I have discussed the answer to my research question ‘how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?’. I now draw together the four sections in this chapter to look at the ‘bigger picture’: how SportHelp re-shaped young people’s personhood by individualising the social. As I have shown, the neoliberal landscape influenced SportHelp through the technologies of New Public Management and responsabilisation. By re-configuring itself into a ‘quasi-market’, SportHelp become more professionalised, devoted more time to safeguarding policies

¹⁰⁰ I started each interview by asking young people to tell me a little bit about themselves. Carys said “I’m 13, I go to this school [...] I’ve got an older sister, and I’ve got a brother, and I play table tennis. That’s it”. Mitch described himself as “I like being active, and playing sport, I started playing table tennis...”, whilst Fish said “I play basketball. I don’t know what else to say”. Likewise, H. response began with “Yeah, um, so I play basketball”. Whilst it is possible these answers were triggered because the purpose of the interview was to gather their experiences of playing their sport, sport nonetheless came across as a core aspect of their identity.

and procedures, and developed a bespoke monitoring and reporting framework ('Sport For Good') which promoted life skills ('social values' – Rudd, 2005) coveted in neoliberal society. This re-shaping into a 'quasi-market' resulted in taking a deficit-reduction approach towards socio-economically disadvantaged young people. In line with neoliberal rhetoric, youths were envisaged as individuals who, on account of their socio-economic status, require their 'deficient' personhood to be 'fixed' (Brown, 2015; McInerney and Smyth, 2015).

To 'improve' young people's lives, SportHelp re-sculpted their notions of personhood by emphasising individual responsibility, discipline, and specific life skills. In this manner, the charity encouraged young people to think of themselves as 'entrepreneurs of the Self' (Kelly, 2006) who are responsible for their own development, self-control, and preparation to become economically 'useful' citizens. Adolescents' contexts or backgrounds were largely overlooked during this process; it was 'up to them' to improve their behaviour, their academics, and their lives. Therefore, SportHelp's deficit-reduction approach consisted in 'individualising the social' (Jamrozik, 2009).

Re-shaping personhood by individualising the social was achieved through the technology of sport. Given the parallels between sport and neoliberal values, such as the importance of competitive reward structures to allocate merit, and the emphasis of individual responsibility and hard work (Coakley, 2011A), sport represented the physical embodiment of neoliberal governmentality. Sport coaches, acting as 'neoliberal transformative leaders', were tasked with 'improving' young people's personhood. As part of this process, they also encouraged young people to become aggressive. This was not conceptualised in terms of turning youths into raging beasts; but in terms of becoming resilient. Sport could help young people 'toughen up' to succeed in the labour market *regardless* of youths' background.

The neoliberal form of personhood SportHelp promoted – via individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills – took root in young people *because* SportHelp operates in the realm of non-formal education. Because non-formal education is less structured and hierarchical, and there's time for the

development of relationships (particularly in comparison to formal education), coaches met young people's needs. In turn, this fostered passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging. Since adolescents like doing their sport, they developed meaningful relationships with coaches and peers, and felt a sense of belonging in their sports sessions. Thus, young people *wanted* to internalise their coaches' teachings; non-formal education served as a suitable platform for the assimilation of neoliberal values of personhood.

What is the bigger picture here? It comprises three parts: how neoliberal governmentality re-shapes what it *means* to be a 'good' human being; how neoliberal governmentality 'co-opts' and 'hijacks' concepts like 'transformative leadership' and 'care'; and lastly, the need to interrogate the purpose of non-formal education carefully given it is a space where neoliberal values can flourish.

Neoliberal governmentality re-shaped personhood by re-configuring what it *means* to be a 'good' human being. A 'good' person is less concerned with "the values of committed citizenship, civic virtue, and the greater collective good" and is instead focused on acquiring "skills, abilities, and dispositions that make them adaptive workers equipped for the ever-changing demands of neoliberal flexible capitalism" (Sugarman, 2015, p. 114). Such a citizen constitutes *homo oeconomicus*: "the man of enterprise and production" (Foucault, 2008, p. 147). Young people learned that the *natural* state of human beings is to be 'entrepreneurs of the Self' (Kelly, 2006); individuals who exist seemingly independent of their historical or cultural background (Sugarman, 2014). What is insidious about this process of re-shaping the 'conduct of conduct' (Rose, 2000) is that neoliberal governmentality was not used coercively (Lorenz, 2012); instead, it was treated as the 'logical' and 'common sense' configuration of what it *means* to be a 'good' person. This is what makes neoliberalism a 'regime of truth' (Read, 2009); a mode of governing which situates itself as the default. Alternative conceptualisations of personhood are at odds with neoliberal governmentality, such as Martin, Sugarman and Hickinbottom's (2003), and Martin and McLellan's (2013) understanding of personhood. In contrast to the neoliberal 'entrepreneur', these authors contend human

beings should be critical and reflective of both their and others' unique historical and socio-cultural background. This, in turn, enables a more empathic approach to dealing with collective problems, one that goes beyond identifying the individualisation of the social as a solution.

Secondly, my data has further illustrated how neoliberal governmentality continues to 'co-opt' and 'corrode' (Sugarman, 2015) common-sense understandings of personhood, 'transformative leadership', 'care', and 'sense of belonging'. By "placing an economic logic at the centre of social, cultural, and political life" (Carr, 2016A, p. 1), these concepts, like personhood, were re-sculpted. These re-configurations are not neutral; they are the outcome of "governmental techniques that represent and help constitute [...] subjects in *particular forms*" (Larner and Butler, 2005, p. 81, italics added to original). The 'social betterment' goal of transformative leadership (Morgan and Bush, 2016) is now concerned with equipping young people with skills and attributes that can help them succeed in the market, not civic engagement or the promotion of a social justice agenda. 'Care' is not unconditional (as Noddings, 1984, conceived it to be); instead, care *depends* on the extent to which a young person models individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. Similarly, the extent to which a young person can feel a sense of belonging is rooted in the extent to which they internalise neoliberal values. This means that young people learn that care and a sense of belonging should be *earned* by demonstrating a form of personhood concurrent with neoliberal governmentality. In short, only a neoliberal citizen who is individually responsible and disciplined is *worthy* of care. In turn, this helps fuel the assumption that 'the market is in human nature' (Read, 2009).

Lastly, my research has contributed to the ongoing debate concerned with the purpose of non-formal education (Hoppers, 2006). I have illustrated how non-formal education spaces can serve as platforms for the assimilation of neoliberal values given an emphasis on reduced hierarchies and the development of relationships (Morgan, Morgan and Kelly, 2008; Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi, 2015). Unlike formal education, a domain plagued by standardised performance indicators and high stakes testing (Carr,

2016b) where there is limited room outside of achieving such goals, non-formal education is *designed* to be more flexible. Considering its stated goal is to meet young people's needs (Romi and Schmida, 2009; Souto-Otero, 2016), SportHelp coaches had more *time* and *space* than the young people's school teachers to meet youths' needs for autonomy, competence, relatedness, physical and psychological safety, stable structures, and a sense of belonging. As a result, young people *wanted* to attend sport sessions, and *wanted* to learn individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills from their coaches. Furthermore, compounding the power of non-formal education as a space to promote neoliberal values is the use of sport as a non-formal education activity. Given the extensive parallels between sport and neoliberal values (Coakley, 2011a; Hartmann, 2016), sport served as the embodiment of neoliberal governmentality; it helped coaches *show* people what 'good' personhood *looked like*. Thus, non-formal education served as an optimal space for SportHelp to re-shape young people's personhood by individualising the social.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I discussed the meaning and implications of my results with regards to my research question 'how does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?'. I did so by firstly addressing how SportHelp was re-shaped into a 'quasi-market' through the technologies of New Public Management and responsibilisation. This encouraged the charity to take a deficit-reduction approach towards supporting young people, which was implemented by promoting individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. Then, I explored what made sport an effective technology of neoliberal governmentality by illustrating the parallels between sport and neoliberal values, and how coaches – as 'neoliberal transformative leaders' – used sport to re-shape young people's personhood. I subsequently outlined how non-formal education enabled the acquisition of neoliberal values. Since coaches met a range of young people's needs, this encouraged young people to *want* to internalise their

coaches' teachings about personhood. Lastly, I discussed the bigger picture emerging from my data: how youths' personhood was re-shaped by individualising the social.

Conclusion

My thesis has explored how the neoliberal landscape shapes a UK charity's provision of non-formal education. Through a critical realist ontology and epistemology, and relying on SportHelp as my case study, my findings were informed by the interviews and observations I collected during a 9-month period. Using thematic analysis to explore the views of managers, coaches, and young people, as well as my observations of three of the charity's sport sessions, I answered my research question:

How does the neoliberal landscape shape SportHelp and its youth sport programmes?

In what follows, I summarise the answer to my research question, highlight my key 'take home messages', illustrate the wider implications of my research findings, and offer some recommendations. I also address a series of limitations and avenues for further research before concluding with some final thoughts.

Answering the research question

The neoliberal landscape shaped SportHelp and its youth sport programmes in a variety of ways. In the first instance, two technologies of neoliberal governmentality (New Public Management and responsabilisation) re-sculpted SportHelp into a 'quasi-market'. SportHelp understood that their existence, like any charity's, *depends* on donors. In a neoliberal, hyper-competitive market (Davies, 2011), SportHelp had to appeal to funders; they had to "grow yourself, to promote yourself, to get the market to reward yourself" (Peters, 1997, cited in Sugarman, 2015, p. 107). The way to do this was to become a 'quasi-market'; to embrace neoliberal governmentality through the practices of New Public Management and responsabilisation. SportHelp developed its own bespoke life-skills framework to monitor and evaluate its

outcomes, it became professionalised by creating divisions of labour and ‘business plans’, and demonstrated responsibility by implementing safeguarding procedures which aimed to manage risk. As a result, two things happened. The charity’s successful re-configuration into a ‘quasi-market’ paid dividends, in that the charity was expanding into more schools and was on the receiving end of substantial grants. However, this came at a cost; a cost the charity did not seem aware of: they embraced a deficit-reduction approach towards supporting socio-economically disadvantaged young people.

A deficit-reduction approach towards supporting disadvantaged young people entails envisaging such adolescents as inherently ‘problematic’ *because* they are socio-economically disadvantaged. It is an assumption shaped by neoliberal governmentality, one which reduces the complexities of low socio-economic status (social problems) to individual problems (Brown, 2015; Jamrozik, 2009; McInerney and Smyth, 2015). Therefore, this deficit-reduction approach meant the charity sought to ‘fix’ young people with the attributes and behaviours that a ‘good’ person ‘should’ have: individual responsibility, discipline, and specific life skills which align with labour market requirements. Thus, SportHelp’s deficit-reduction approach had as its objective to re-shape young people’s personhood by ‘transforming’ them into neoliberal citizens.

To modify the conduct of youths’ conduct (Rose, 2000), and to encourage them to govern according to individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills, SportHelp relied on sport as a technology of neoliberal governmentality. Through the practice of sport – an activity whose values run parallel to neoliberalism’s (Coakley, 2011A; Hartmann, 2016) – sports coaches succeeded in ‘fixing’ young people’s ‘deficient’ personhood by instilling the neoliberal attributes that would re-shape youths’ into ‘good people’. This process was particularly achievable *because* SportHelp operated in the realm of non-formal education. Unlike formal education, where there is limited space and time to meet young people’s needs or develop deep human relationships, coaches managed to foster passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging in the youths they worked with. However, the concepts of ‘relationships’ and a ‘sense of

belonging', were re-configured – even 'hijacked' – by neoliberal governmentality. Young people learned being cared for and experiencing a sense of belonging was *conditional* on the extent to which adolescents modelled individual responsibility, discipline, and specific life skills. The more neoliberal values were internalised, the greater the quality of relationships and sense of belonging.

In sum, the neoliberal landscape shaped SportHelp and its youth sport programmes extensively. It re-configured the charity into a 'quasi-market', it encouraged a deficit-reduction approach towards supporting young people, and it promoted this 'support' in terms of the neoliberal values of individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. Furthermore, neoliberal governmentality was physically embodied through the practice of sport, an activity the charity's coaches used to promote neoliberal personhood. Lastly, neoliberal governmentality 'corroded' how young people's needs were met, in terms of re-sculpting 'care' and a 'sense of belonging' to be *conditional* on the extent to which youths' modelled individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. Therefore, neoliberal governmentality re-configured who SportHelp were *as a charity* as well as who the young people were becoming as *human beings*.

The 'take home' messages

Two key findings emerged from my study. The first encompasses the corrosive power of neoliberal governmentality and how it re-configured personhood, transformative leadership, care, a sense of belonging, and what it means to be a charity. Secondly, my research demonstrated how non-formal education sport programmes are sites where the values of neoliberal governmentality can flourish and readily be instilled in young people.

The corrosive power of neoliberal governmentality

“The language and practices of neoliberalism are revising how, as self-interpreting beings, we see ourselves and others, inevitably transforming what we are” (Sugarman, 2015, p. 105).

Sugarman’s quote is at the heart of how neoliberal governmentality ‘hijacks’ common sense understandings of who we are as human beings. This ‘revision of ourselves’ occurs in relation to the free market paradigm, an equation whereby “free market = competition = best value for money = optimum efficiency for individuals as both consumers and owners of private property” (Lorenz 2012, p. 601). This ‘market logic’ is deeply embedded in UK society (Peck and Tickell, 2007; Peck and Tickell, 2012) and is so pervasive that it can be considered a ‘regime of truth’ (Read, 2009); a ‘logic’ so obvious and coherent that it is beyond challenging. Therefore, under the neoliberal rule, everything and everyone must re-configure itself into a market that, in turn, can be exchanged or sold (Harvey, 2005). We must all become *homo oeconomicus* (Foucault, 2008): an ‘entrepreneur of the Self’. Such an enterprising self

“is thus both an active self and a calculating self, a self that calculates about itself and that acts upon itself in order to better itself” (Rose, 1996, p. 154, italics in original)

SportHelp acted upon itself to become a ‘good’ charity; one concerned with neoliberal monitoring and reporting (the SFG life-skills framework), neoliberal governmentality (professionalisation), and neoliberal responsabilisation (implementing safeguarding procedures to minimise risk). Though this re-configured what it *means* to be a charity – an organisation more preoccupied with its own survival than attending to young people’s needs – SportHelp had little choice in the matter. Re-sculpting itself in the market’s image would engender funds; not doing so would likely imply its demise. Thus, neoliberal governmentality ‘suggested’ that SportHelp acting upon itself would be in SportHelp’s best interests. This is the corrosive power of neoliberal governmentality: it seemed ‘logical’ for the charity to ‘transform’ itself.

Akin to how neoliberalism re-sculpted what it *means* to be a charity, it also altered what a ‘good’ human being *is*. In the first instance, neoliberal governmentality re-shapes socio-economic disadvantage by individualising the social (Jamrozik, 2009); by reducing complex social problems to individual problems (Brown, 2015; McInerney and Smyth, 2015). Those in poverty are conceived as ‘losers’ (because they have not succeeded in the labour market) who need to be ‘fixed’ to become ‘winners’. This ‘corrective’ process entails absorbing neoliberal values of personhood: individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills suitable for the labour market. Therefore, what it *means* to be a person is revised. ‘Good’ personhood is demonstrated by becoming an entrepreneur of the Self (Kelly, 2006) by fostering the belief that

“we are self-contained, autonomous beings who are masters of our abilities, efforts, goals, choices, and accomplishments, and capable of functioning largely independently of social and cultural surrounds” (Sugarman, 2015, p. 113).

It is a form of personhood which ignores the historical and socio-cultural background of both oneself and others, and stands in contrast to alternative notions of what a person is. For Martin and McLellan (2013), ‘good’ personhood deviates from neoliberal governmentality by emphasising that human beings should be both critical and reflective about their own unique historical and socio-cultural backgrounds, as well as others’. This promotes a more empathic understanding between human beings instead of a ‘blame game’ (Brown, 2015). However, such a vision of personhood is difficult to implement considering how neoliberal governmentality has corroded what *constitutes* a ‘good’ citizen:

‘The market is in human nature’ is the proposition that cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged; in my opinion, it is the most crucial terrain of ideological struggle in our time (Jameson, cited in Read, 2009, p. 26).

The final aspect my research identified to have been ‘hijacked’ by neoliberal governmentality are concepts such as transformative leadership, care, and a sense of belonging. Concepts which, in their

origins, stand in opposition to neoliberal governmentality by starting with “questions of social justice” – in the case of transformative leadership (Shields, 2010, p. 559) – or being universal instead of conditional (in terms of Noddings’, 1984, care). Transformative leadership was understood in terms of *neoliberal* transformative leadership because the coaches’ and charity’s aims for ‘social betterment’ did not focus on altering social structures or empowering young people to challenge inequality; their goal was to strengthen disadvantaged young people’s credentials for the free market. So, ‘empowerment’ was co-opted to mean ‘fixing disadvantaged adolescents’ character to help them stand a better chance at getting a job’. The extent to which this constitutes social justice depends on one’s definition of social justice, and it is a point I will revisit later in the conclusion.

In terms of ‘care’ and a ‘sense of belonging’, neoliberal governmentality made both concepts *conditional* on the extent to which young people re-sculpted their personhood. Since a ‘good’ human being is an entrepreneur of themselves who takes responsibility for their learning and behaviour, and demonstrates self-control, this meant that care and a sense of belonging was readily available for such young people. Those who repeatedly misbehaved, or failed to improve upon themselves, were ‘bad’ people, less deserving of care or a sense of belonging. Consequently, these two concepts were ‘co-opted’ in such a way that young people learned that ‘good’ human beings (those who internalise neoliberal values) are *worthy* of care and feeling a sense of belonging, whilst those who fail to become entrepreneurs of the Self are less likely feel cared-for or a strong sense of belonging. Once again, it is an individualisation of the social.

How non-formal education sport programmes can promote neoliberal governmentality

Since SportHelp operated within schools, and coaches delivered sessions before, during, and after school, young people inevitably drew parallels between non-formal education and formal education. What became apparent was that non-formal education, with its emphasis on more informal approaches,

less hierarchical structures, and focus on relationships (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974; Morgan, Morgan and Kelly, 2008; Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi, 2015), succeeded in one area where formal education¹⁰¹ struggled. It succeeded in meeting young people's needs for autonomy, competence, relationships, physically and psychologically safe environments, stable structures, and a sense of belonging. In doing so, through participating in SportHelp's programmes, young people's passion for their sport flourished, they developed caring relationships with their coaches, and they gained a sense of belonging¹⁰². Though young people generally had negative perceptions about their teachers and positive ones about their coaches, the core of these differences can be attributed to the *spaces* teachers and coaches inhabited. Within a non-formal education space, coaches had the *time* to foster passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging. Within formal education, where teachers need to 'teach to the test' and attend to an array of carefully scrutinised performance indicators (Carr, 2016b), there was limited to no time to meet young people's needs.

Since coaches succeeded in fostering passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging, this resulted in young people who *wanted* to attend their session, and who *wanted* to learn from their coaches. When the coaches emphasised individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills, adolescents were keen to internalise these values *because* their coach highlighted them as important for youths' development and betterment. Contrarily, and even if teachers had promoted these same values, young people were less inclined to *listen or learn* from their teachers. This means that non-formal education, by the nature of what it is (relaxed and less hierarchical), can function as a space where neoliberal governmentality can be readily instilled in young people.

¹⁰¹ "Highly institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured 'education system'" (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974, p. 8).

¹⁰² Albeit with the caveat I previously discussed regarding how these needs were fulfilled *depending* on the extent to which adolescents' internalised individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills.

This process was further bolstered in SportHelp's case using sport as the non-formal education activity. The parallels between sport and neoliberal values are well-documented (Coakley, 2011A; Hartmann, 2016), particularly in that both 'regimes of truth' rely on competitive reward structures to allocate merit, they value individual responsibility and discipline, and assume that the life skills acquired through sport (such as communication or teamwork) are transferable to the labour market. What sets sport apart from neoliberalism is that the former is tangible, whilst the latter is *intangible*. Thus, sport serves as the physical embodiment of neoliberal values:

"Sport serves as the literal model of the ideal or moral standard to which communities and social orders should aspire and by which social life itself is constituted and maintained" (Hartmann, 2016, p. 55).

Consequently, the space of non-formal education *in itself* provided fertile ground for the acquisition of neoliberal values because young people *wanted* to learn from their coaches. This fertility was compounded by the activity of sport; an activity which constituted an ideal vessel for neoliberal governmentality to re-shape young people's notions of personhood.

Wider implications of the research: What is the purpose of non-formal education?

Having summarised my thesis, and highlighted the two 'take-home' messages, I now address the wider implications of my research: what is the role of non-formal education? In the Introduction chapter, I illustrated how the global provision of non-formal education has blossomed into a "worldwide education industry" (Romi and Schmida, 2009, p. 257). In addition to how non-formal education is often described as an attempt to meet young people's needs (Ardizzone, 2003; Coombs and Ahmed, 1974; Kiilakoski and Kivijärvi, 2015; Romi and Schmida, 2009; Russell, 2001; Souto-Otero, 2016; Weyer, 2009), in my introduction I also sketched out how youth charities are major providers of non-formal education in the

UK¹⁰³. Thus, the debate about the purpose of non-formal education remains at the forefront of academic research (Mills and Kraftl, 2014):

“It is significant that there is now, more than ever before in the history of non-formal education, an interest in the programmatic and socio-political location of non-formal education within the wider totality of (basic) education provisions: Whom do the initiatives serve? With what degree of legitimacy? Under whose control? With what distinctive approaches and methodologies? And for what purposes?” (Hoppers, 2006, pp. 15-16).

My research adds to this debate by exploring how a youth charity provided non-formal education for socio-economically disadvantaged youth through the activity of sport. Situating this provision of non-formal education within the socio-political context of neoliberalism, and demonstrating the extent to which neoliberal governmentality influenced both SportHelp and its youth sport programmes, my thesis advances the debate of non-formal education in relation to social justice and social control. Though charities are considered vehicles for social justice (Buckingham, 2009; Reisch, 2007), I contend SportHelp – though striving for social justice – enacted social control.

What constitutes social justice is contested. For Miller (1976), social justice can only be understood in relation to the society one lives in. Therefore, in a neoliberal society, “we can thus see how the experience of the market leads people to adopt a conception of justice as the requital of desert” (Miller, 1976, p. 296). In other words, the market gives you what you deserve: *if* you work hard and make the right choices, the market will reward you. Taking this definition of social justice, and reflecting on how SportHelp operated by fostering individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills attuned to the labour market, what emerges is that SportHelp acted in a *socially just manner*. The charity was *preparing* socio-economically disadvantaged young people to compete in the market; to survive in a neoliberal socio-

¹⁰³ Of the 183,000 registered charities, 94,000 (over half) focus on young people.

political landscape. Thus, one could argue that, given the UK is a neoliberal society (Peck and Tickell, 2007), it is *more* socially just to prepare youths' candidature to the free market than it is to encourage them to cooperate rather than compete. This is because a lack of preparation for the free market's 'regime' is likelier to result in difficulty securing a job or progressing in life.

However, this is not an argument I – nor many others (e.g. Giroux, 2005; Peck and Tickell, 2012; Springer, 2016) – agree with. The central problem with this argument is one of not seeing the forest for the trees; it is the assumption that neoliberalism is a social system with no alternative, and that (as I quoted earlier), 'the market is in human nature'. Thus, whilst SportHelp offered every indication they were striving for social justice, I contend their conceptualisation of social justice is the one I outlined in the previous paragraph. For me, preparation for the market because we live in a market society does not constitute social justice; it is social control.

My conception of social control is rooted in an alternative definition of social justice to the one outlined by Miller (1976). For Lorenz (2014, p. 14), social justice refers to

“social policies [...] that protect vulnerable and disadvantaged groups [...] from oppression, discrimination, exclusion or that support them materially”

Despite SportHelp's promotion of passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging “being pitched as benign” in an attempt to support disadvantaged groups, it is insufficient to constitute social justice because the trio of elements represented “containers for normative power that articulate threads of neoliberal rationalities” (Hodgson, 2016, p. 9). Underlying passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging was the thrust to re-shape young people's personhood according to individual responsibility, discipline, and life skills. SportHelp did not attempt to alter social structures; young people were not encouraged to become agents of social change (Coakley, 2011b) nor to challenge dominating power structures (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011). Similarly, adolescents' contexts and the stressors in their lives (which are

generally amplified in the lives of youth from lower socio-economic status) were reduced from social problems to individual problems (Jamrozik, 2009; Harkness, Gregg and Macmillan, 2012). In turn, the normalisation of ‘neoliberal rationalities’ (as Hodgson, above, put it) resulted in exacerbating social exclusion (Kelly, 2011). Young people who did not internalise neoliberal values – those who did not ‘fix’ their ‘deficient’ personhood by not ‘wanting to help themselves’¹⁰⁴ – were less favoured by their coaches. Therefore, considering SportHelp embraced a deficit-reduction approach towards supporting young people whereby young people’s complex needs were reduced to an ‘individualisation of the social’, the extent to which SportHelp enforced social control instead of social justice becomes more apparent:

“Pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. It is an instrument of dehumanisation” (Freire, 2003, p. 54).

These considerations of social justice and social control advance the debate about the purpose of non-formal education by highlighting *why* exploring charity-provision of non-formal education is important. Considering charities are increasingly relied upon to support the welfare of socio-economically disadvantaged young people (Williams, Cloke and Thomas, 2012), it is imperative to gain a deeper appreciation of *how* they help youths. My research indicates this ‘support’ came in the form of preparing adolescents for the labour market. Contrarily, I contend the purpose of non-formal education should be to help adolescents develop critical thinking, empathy, and self-reflection.

Beyond advancing the debate of non-formal education, my research has contributed to furthering the fields of governmentality and charities. Firstly, by using SportHelp as a case study, I provided an in-depth *practical* account of how neoliberal governmentality operates by illustrating “the ongoing

¹⁰⁴ As Coach Karl said.

hybridisation of neoliberal practices and ideas with local conditions and forms” (Wacquant, 2012, p. 70). Secondly, considering the charity sector is under-studied and that they are significant providers of non-formal education, I have made a case regarding the need to explore the work charities do more carefully. After all, non-formal education is a site where neoliberal values of personhood can flourish, particularly if such values are ‘delivered’ through the medium of sport.

Recommendations

In the Methodology chapter, I noted that my research could make recommendations at the macro-level (for policy), meso-level (for the charity SportHelp), and the micro-level (for SportHelp’s managers, coaches, and young people). At the policy level, my recommendation is that charities need to be given more room to breathe in terms of how they operate as well as monitor and report outcomes. Current neoliberal ‘pay by results’ policies encourage what Dane called the “bums on seats approach”, and ultimately shift charities’ attention from young people’s needs to concerns with the organisation’s economic survival.

At a meso-level, my recommendation for SportHelp is that their unique model (operating in schools) can achieve wonderful results, particularly in terms of how coaches foster passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging. However, reducing the competitive element of programmes, or re-thinking the competitive element, could create a more inclusive atmosphere. Furthermore, retaining unstructured and unmeasured spaces, like lunch times, is *fundamental* for relationships between coaches and adolescents to flourish.

Lastly, at the micro-level, my recommendations for managers, coaches, and young people is to encourage more critical thinking about the assumed value of sport in re-shaping personhood, and consideration of what this ‘re-shaping’ process entails. All my interviewees were keen on making a difference to society, and whilst sport can be a vehicle unto such an end, it has its limitations. Does

promoting a form of personhood that is a-historical and socio-culturally a-contextual, whereby young people demonstrate individual responsibility, docility, and ‘never show weakness to their opponents’, constitute being a ‘good’ person?

Limitations

At the end of my Methodology chapter, I devoted some words to a sub-section titled “what went wrong and what I learned from it”. This described a few of the methodological challenges I faced, and how they shaped my thesis. I would like to add to that list by highlighting three core limitations of my thesis.

Sample

If I had to underline one central limitation, it would be that my sample predominantly (if not exclusively) consisted of managers, coaches, and young people who had positive experiences of SportHelp. Though there was a degree of dissent and disagreement about certain aspects, my participants were all in agreement about the value of SportHelp’s youth sport programmes. Whilst the data generated was rich and insightful, I came to realise how exploring an alternative view point would have perhaps offered a more ‘balanced’ portrayal of SportHelp. I would have been particularly interested in talking to young people on the periphery of the sports programmes, or to those who had dropped out. Finding and engaging these young people would have certainly added a further layer of complexity to my data collection, but it would have allowed me to explore my suspicion that these adolescents either did not re-shape their personhood in accordance with neoliberal values, or that they were more interested in recreation than competition.

Coaching sessions and saturation

Though I set out to observe three coaching sessions (two basketball and one table tennis), due to the unforeseen complications of data collection I outlined in the Methodology chapter, I effectively ended up observing one basketball and one table tennis session¹⁰⁵. Without falling into a quantitative fallacy of ‘a bigger sample is better’, I would have liked to properly observe a total of two basketball and two table tennis sessions. There are multiple reasons for this. Firstly, the coaches all had different personalities, used different approaches, and generated different environments. Whilst Vincent emphasised precision, Jake promoted maximum concentration and aggression as perseverance. Karl was more playful than Vincent and Jake, and Alfred (whom I only interviewed) was particularly analytical and methodical (he described his table tennis sessions as a meritocracy). Whereas I felt I reached a point of saturation (Bowen, 2008) observing Vincent’s and Jake’s sessions, I did not feel I achieved saturation when considering all the sessions as a cohort. Furthermore, I would have also liked to observe a coaching session led by a female coach.

Ethnographic depth

A final key limitation was that I only observed a fraction SportHelp’s work. I set out to observe the coaching sessions, however, towards the end of my research I came to realise how spending full days with the coaches could have yielded a more comprehensive picture of how the charity operated. This would have permitted me to appreciate how the different sports sessions during the day (before school, during school, and after school) operate alongside unstructured spaces (like lunch-times, break-times, and corridor run-ins). I got a sense of the latter by sometimes arriving before a session began, or staying after

¹⁰⁵ I was only able to observe two sessions of Coach Karl’s basketball session, versus ten observations a-piece for Vincent’s (basketball) and Jake’s (table tennis).

a session ended, but these were glimpses in comparison of what I could have unearthed if I had spent full days alongside the coaches.

Future research

As is the case with all research projects, answering a question inevitably engenders more questions. Though there are many potential avenues which can be pursued, I believe there are three areas which would be interesting to unpack in greater detail.

What is the role of non-formal education in the neoliberal marketplace?

Though earlier in the chapter I addressed how my research contributes to the debate about the role of non-formal education, there is still more work to be done in this area. Given the prevalence and popularity of charities in the UK, a significant avenue for future research is to attend Romi and Schmida's (2009) call to explore non-formal education as an 'educational approach'. Considering how SportHelp re-shaped young people's notions of personhood in alignment with neoliberal ideals, we need to continue to critically interrogate the role of non-formal education. To what extent is non-formal education attempting to emulate the standardised performance indicators of formal education (New Public Management, professionalisation) whilst using more relationship-based teaching practices? Is non-formal education attempting to 'mop-up' the pitfalls of a neoliberal social system? Are other sites of non-formal education beyond charities designed to enact social control, or social justice?

To what extent do other charities re-shape personhood?

Re-sculpting notions of personhood was a fundamental aspect of SportHelp's work. However, this is not necessarily representative of the rest of the youth sports charity sector, or the rest of the youth

charity sector. Undertaking further research into this area and probing the extent to which re-configuring personhood is prevalent would help make sense of how charities are supporting young people. If other organisations focus on personhood, what aspects of becoming a ‘good’ person do they emphasise? Furthermore, it would be fascinating to gauge how re-shaping personhood within a charity’s programmes translates into settings beyond the charity. Some authors have already warned us about the dangers of assuming life skills taught in sport are automatically transferrable to other domains (e.g., Danish, 2002). Is this also the case with personhood, or, contrarily, does influencing an adolescents’ concept of a ‘good’ citizen more readily permeate multiple aspects of their lives?

How much of an impact can a single charity make?

Though SportHelp appeared to generate some positive results which suggested they were improving young people’s lives¹⁰⁶, it would be interesting to explore the extent to which this change could be attributed to the charity. What role did parents, teachers, and peers have on young people’s development? One of the criticisms levelled at coaches as ‘transformative leaders’ is precisely the assumption that one person cannot be capable of dramatically altering a young person’s life (Shields, 2010). Undertaking a similar study to mine, but encompassing peers, parents, and teachers could be a step in the right direction to appreciate how a charity can offer support for adolescents. As the young people in my study reflected, the atmosphere in the coaching sessions tended to be radically different to the classroom – adolescents enjoyed time on the court more than in class. So, even within the school grounds, youths were subjected to different spaces which impacted them in different ways. Were the young people who readily internalised SportHelp’s values of individual responsibility and discipline encouraged to ‘learn’ these aspects from their parents? If this were the case (and I do not know if it was),

¹⁰⁶ Such as fostering passion, relationships, and a sense of belonging.

would it mean SportHelp's programmes were predominantly engaging young people who were *already* being configured into neoliberal citizens?

Final thoughts

My argument that SportHelp promoted social control instead of social justice does not imply I am attacking the charity nor its staff. This difference in opinion aims to further the work of previous authors (Chouinard and Crooks, 2008; Egdell, Dutton and McQuaid, 2016) by continuing to explore the tensions between neoliberalism and the charity sector. SportHelp, as a charity fighting for survival in a hyper-competitive landscape, is proverbially caught between a rock and a hard place. If they want to secure funds from the government and private corporations, they have little recourse but to follow the neoliberal 'rules of play'. Contrarily, my position as a researcher – less hamstrung by the neoliberal apparatus – enables me to reach conclusions such as my thesis that SportHelp were enacting social control, not social justice. If I were in SportHelp's shoes, what would I have done? Frankly, I am not sure. But if adhering to neoliberal governmentality meant I could still *try* to support socio-economically disadvantaged young people, then I would have probably done what SportHelp did. Though the charity may not be fostering social justice, they are still providing young people with a space where their passion can flourish, and where there is a chance to develop meaningful human relationships and gain a sense of belonging. At least, it is *something*.

However, it is here where I find the overwhelming power of neoliberalism frustrating. The argument that 'at least, it is something' mimics the argument global corporations like Nike use when they swoop into third world nations and offer inhuman amounts of pay for extensive hours of work: at least it is *something*; two dollars a day is better than zero dollars a day. So, how can we respond to the influence of neoliberalism? I use the word 'we' purposefully here. To say 'what can charities do' is to place the responsibility on them to resist and fight neoliberal governmentality. Instead, it is on all of us to gradually

resist the forms of personhood neoliberalism sculpts. Whilst I do not offer any utopian dreams of overthrowing the system, what I can encourage is the internalisation and promotion of personhood in terms of how Martin and McLellan (2013) conceive it. Being critical and reflective about our own unique historical and socio-cultural background, as well as other people's, enables a more empathic approach towards solving individual and collective problems. It will take more than that to dismantle the neoliberal regime, but it is a start.

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Appendices

Appendix one: Sample consent forms

Managers

Consent Form - Managers

Participation in a Research Project with SportHelp and the University of Bath

Dear _____,

I am a PhD researcher at the University of Bath who will be working with SportHelp for the next 9 months. This purpose of this document is to inform you about my research. After reading it, if you are happy to participate in my research, please sign and date the document.

What is this research project about?

I want to find out how sport can help children and adolescents grow and develop. In other words, I want to understand what needs children and adolescents have and how sport can meet those needs.

How do I know this is a serious research project?

My research project has been approved by the Department of Education at the University of Bath and SportHelp. I have been DBS (previously CRB) checked by SportHelp, exactly like SportHelp coaches are.

How would I participate in the research project?

I would like to interview you, one-to-one, for approximately one hour. The purpose of the interview would be to a) understand what you think the needs of SportHelp's youths are, and b) to help me appreciate the philosophy and culture of SportHelp. My aim is not to 'catch you out'; the interview would essentially be an informal chat!

Will the interview be recorded?

I would like to audio record the interview (no video), however, if you are uncomfortable with this, I can take notes instead. The reason I would like to record the interview is so I can accurately represent your views.

What will happen with the information that comes from the interview?

I will mainly use the information to help me write my PhD thesis. I may also publish the information in academic articles alongside other people I interview. I would not simply publish your interview transcript; I may use elements from it to provide a context of how SportHelp functions.

Will my identity be kept secret?

Yes, it will. To guarantee anonymity, when I write about the views you voiced in the interview, I will use a pseudonym of your choice. I will also ensure to remove any information that could lead a reader to determine who you are (for instance, I would not mention your specific job title or the charity's name).

Coach Consent Form

Participation in a Research Project with SportHelp and the University of Bath

Dear _____,

I am a PhD researcher at the University of Bath who will be working with SportHelp for the next 9 months. This purpose of this document is to inform you about my research. After reading it, if you are happy to participate in my research, please sign and date the document.

What is this research project about?

I want to find out how sport can help children and adolescents grow and develop. In other words, I want to understand what needs children and adolescents have and how sport can meet those needs.

How do I know this is a serious research project?

My research project has been approved by the Department of Education at the University of Bath and SportHelp. I have been DBS (previously CRB) checked by SportHelp, exactly like SportHelp coaches are.

Where and when would this project take place?

It would take place at the school you work at, mostly during your sport sessions. Depending on your availability, the project will start in June or July, and end sometime in January, February or March (2016).

How will this project be researched, and how would I participate in it?

There are two parts to the project. One part involves observations, the other involves two interviews. The rough structure is as follows: at the beginning of the project, we would have the first interview. Then there would be at least 6 months of observations (at least once a week). At the end of the period of observations, we would have the second interview.

How would the observations work?

I will be observing your SportHelp coaching sessions (once a week) for up to 9 months. Coaching sessions may be Peris, or after school clubs. Observations will allow me to understand how, through your coaching, you help young people. I would like to take notes during the observation phase, however, the notes will be only be used for my research. They will **not** be an evaluation of your coaching practices.

How would the interviews work?

I would like to interview you twice, one-to-one, for approximately one hour and a half (each time). The purpose of the interviews would be to help me understand what your coaching philosophy is about, how you use your sport to help young people, how you work to achieve SportHelp's goals, etc. The aim of these interviews is not to 'catch you out'; the interview would essentially be an informal chat that would help me to understand how you coach!

Will the interviews be recorded?

I would like to audio record the interview (no video), however, if you are uncomfortable with this, I can take notes instead. The reason I would like to record the interview is so I can accurately represent your views.

What will happen with the information that comes from the observations and interviews?

I will mainly use the information to help me write my PhD thesis. I may also share the information gathered (alongside other people's interviews and observations) in different ways, like academic articles or conference presentations.

Will my identity be kept secret?

Yes. To guarantee anonymity, when I write about the views you voiced in the interview, or about any observations I make, I will use a pseudonym of your choice. I will also ensure to remove any information that could lead a reader to determine who you are (for instance, I would not mention what school you work at, or the charity's name). Additionally, only my PhD supervisor and I will have access to the raw audio files (if you are OK with being audio recorded). The information you share with me will be kept strictly confidential, and will only be discussed with my PhD supervisor. I will not reveal the content of our interview or discuss the interview with anybody else, and that includes your SportHelp co-workers. In short, once I finish collecting my data and write it up, nobody will be able to link anything you said back to you.

Can I stop participating in the project whenever I want to?

Yes. You may stop participating in my research at any point, regardless of how much (or little) we have done. If you wish to stop participating, all information I have collected will be immediately destroyed. You will suffer no negative effect whatsoever if you choose to stop participating in my PhD!

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

Absolutely – if you want to! Just write down your e-mail address and I will share my results with you when I get them: _____

If you have any questions you would like to ask me, you can e-mail me here: iac25@bath.ac.uk or call me: XXXXXXXXXXXX.

If you are happy to participate in my research project, please sign here:

Name

Signature

Date

Thank you very much – I truly mean it!

Yours sincerely,

Ioannis Costas Batlle

Young people

Young Person Consent:

Participation in a Research Project with SportHelp and the University of Bath

Hello!

My name is Ioannis, and I am a student at the University of Bath. I'm going to be working with SportHelp for the next 9 months and I'd like to ask you a favour: would you be up for helping me with my research project?

What is this research project about?

I want to find out why you play sport with SportHelp, what you learn from SportHelp, what you think you should learn from your coach...

Where would this project take place?

It would happen during your sports sessions with SportHelp.

How will this project being researched?

There are two parts to my project. One part involves me observing you and your coach. The other involves me interviewing you. Don't be worried – it is not a test. The observations and interviews will help me learn from you!

When would the project start and end?

It depends on your exam period and when your coach is free. However, it would start at some time in May, June or July, and end sometime in January or February (2016).

What is the point of the observations?

I will be observing you and your coach in a coached session, once a week, for up to 9 months. The only things I will be observing are how your coach teaches you, how your coach helps you improve, how you get on with your coach... I am interested in learning how your coaching sessions work and what goes on in them.

Why am I being interviewed?

I would like to interview you two times: once at the start of the 9 months, and once at the end (so maybe once in June, and once in January, for example. It might be a bit less than 9 months). The point of the interviews is to help me understand why you like doing sport with SportHelp, to see what types of things you learn from your coach... Each of the two interviews will last more or less one hour, but don't worry, I'll make sure it is fun for you. You won't have to prepare anything for it, all you have to do is give me your opinion about questions I ask you! We would have the interview at your school, somewhere where you and your coach think it is a good idea to talk, but only you and I would be talking. I would also like to record what you say (only audio, not video). Only I would have access to the audio files.

What will happen with all the information gathered through observations and interviews?

I will mainly use it to write my dissertation (which is a big project document). I might also use it to write small articles.

Will my identity be kept secret? Will people know what I have said in the interviews?

Your identity will be kept secret. Other people may read what you said, but they won't know *you* said it, because I'll use a fake name. Also, I will not talk to your coach, your parents, or your friends about anything we talk about in the interview. The only time I might break this rule is if you tell me something that, for your safety, I think your coach or your parents should urgently know.

Can I stop participating in the project whenever I want to?

Yes. If at any point, you feel you no longer want to be a part of my project, all you have to do is tell me, or tell your coach (or tell your parents to tell me or tell your coach!). Nothing bad will happen – your life will continue exactly the same way as it was before. You will still continue to play sport with SportHelp without problems. I will delete all the information you have given me, with no hard feelings!

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

Absolutely – if you want to! If you are interested, I will let you know what results I found.

If you have any questions at all, you can ask your parents to contact me (my contact information is in the other sheet of paper your coach gave you). If not, you can ask your coach. If you would like to meet me before accepting to help me out, that's OK! Let me know and I'll come to one of your coaching sessions 😊

If you are happy to participate in my research project, please sign here:

_____	_____	

Name	Signature	Date

If you have signed this form, please return it to your coach.

Thank you very much – I truly mean it!

Yours sincerely,

Ioannis Costas Batlle

Parents

Parent Consent Form:

Participation in a Research Project with SportHelp and the University of Bath

Dear parent,

I am a PhD researcher at the University of Bath who will be working with SportHelp for the next 9 months. I am contacting you to ask for your permission to include your son or daughter in my research project.

What is this research project about?

I want to find out how sport can help children and adolescents grow and develop. In other words, I want to understand what needs children and adolescents have and how sport can meet those needs.

How do I know this is a serious research project?

My research project has been approved by the Department of Education at the University of Bath, SportHelp, and your son's or daughter's coach. I have been DBS (previously CRB) checked by SportHelp, exactly like SportHelp coaches are.

Where would this project take place?

It would happen during your son's or daughter's sports sessions with SportHelp.

How will this project being researched?

There are two parts to the project. One part involves observations, the other involves interviews.

When would the project start and end?

It depends on your son's or daughter's exam period, and their coach's availability. However, it would start at some time in May, June or July, and end sometime in January or February (2016).

How would the observations work?

I will be observing SportHelp coaching sessions (once a week) for up to 9 months. Coaching sessions may be individual (the coach and your son or daughter), or with more young people (the coach, your son or daughter, and other young people). But observations will always be with (at least) the coach and your son or daughter. Observations will help me see what needs young people have and how coaches can use sport to help young people develop.

How would the interviews work?

I would like to interview your son or daughter two times: once at the beginning of the 9 months and once at the end. The point of the interviews is for me to understand what types of things your son or daughter likes about doing sport, how sport helps them grow and develop... Each interview would last one hour (or the length of a single SportHelp session). It would be a one-on-one interview: just your son or daughter and myself. The interview would take place in your son's or daughter's school, in a location approved by the coach and your son or daughter. I would like to record the audio of the interview (not video). Only I will have access to the audio files from the interviews.

What will happen with the information that comes from the observations and interviews?

I will mainly use the information to help me write my PhD dissertation. I may also publish the information in academic articles.

Will my son's or daughter's identity be kept secret?

Yes, it will. When I write about what your son or daughter said in the interview in my dissertation, I will use a fake name to refer to them. Also, I will not talk to SportHelp or their coaches about what your son or daughter said in the interview. The only time I may speak to SportHelp is if I think your son or daughter has said something that, for their own safety, I cannot keep secret.

Can my son or daughter stop participating in the project whenever they want to?

Yes. As well as having your permission (for your son or daughter to participate), I need their permission too. If at any point during the project your son or daughter wants to stop participating, they will stop participating instantly, and nothing bad will come of it. All the information I have collected about them will be destroyed. If they stop participating in the project, they will continue doing sport with SportHelp without any problems at all.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

Absolutely – if you want to! Just write down your e-mail address and I will share my results with you when I get them: _____

If you have any questions you would like to ask me, you can e-mail me here: iac25@bath.ac.uk or call me: XXXXXXXXXXXX.

Parent: if you are happy for your son or daughter to participate in my research project, please sign here:

Name

Signature

Date

If your parent has signed this form, please return it to your coach.

Thank you very much – I truly mean it!

Yours sincerely,

Ioannis Costas Batlle

Appendix two: Interview schedules

I conducted semi-structured interviews with all participants. Though the interview questionnaires that follow may appear lengthy and structured, their purpose was to prompt key areas of interest (denoted by sub-headings). Each interview took a unique direction depending on my participants' responses, however, my opening question was always the same: tell me a little about yourself. I felt this eased the participant into the conversation, and meant I could begin exploring my key areas of interest in relation to each person's response. Lastly, as my experience and confidence as an interviewer grew, I distanced myself from the interview schedule and instead prepared for each interview by writing down approximately three questions for each of the key areas I wanted to probe.

Interview schedule for managers

Background

1. What led you to become a trustee/manager for SportHelp?
2. Why SportHelp, and not another charity or type of organisation?
3. How long have you been involved with SportHelp for?
4. What does your role within the charity entail?

Perceptions / perspective about how the charity operates

1. What is the "SportHelp way"
2. How does SportHelp raise funds?
3. Are there any contradictions between what SportHelp's aims are, and what its funder's want?
4. Are there any contradictions between what SportHelp considers are its youth's needs, and what funders consider are youth's needs?
5. How are sponsors recruited?
6. How constrained is SportHelp in what it wants to do, relative to funders' or major stakeholders? (And who are these other major stakeholders?).

7. How does SportHelp establish a relationship with a school? Presumably via a contract, but what type of contract, and what are the terms and conditions of the contract? Are there any financial negotiations? Are there any sports performance targets?
8. Why did SportHelp Charity change its name to SportHelp?
9. In one of the SportHelp videos, Mike De Giorgio talks about the “super coach”: a blend of a technically skilled sports coach twinned with a social worker. How does SportHelp ensure they are hiring coaches with a social worker background? How does SportHelp ‘teach’ social work – what trainings are available/are compulsory?
10. SportHelp started off working with Youth Workers, but switched to Sports Coaches. Why? Did SportHelp perceived needs of the youths they worked with have anything to do with the change?
11. Trustees wield considerable power in that they direct how the charity advances. What type of selection do the trustees undergo? If the coaches are meant to be part social worker (to meet the needs of youths), are the trustees also part social worker (so they can empathise with the needs of young people?)
12. It seems to me like the majority of trustees are from a business background. There are no academics, social workers, sports coaches... do you see this as a strength for SportHelp, or a weakness that should be tackled (i.e., a more heterogeneous group)?
13. Could you explain what Coach Core is, how it works, and how it can help meet the needs of youths in poverty? Similarly, coaches coming through it are being taught the “SportHelp way”. What is that? Who coaches the coaches?
14. Does SportHelp have an overarching goal it is chasing, perhaps an idealistic one that it will never reach? What is it?
15. How much freedom are coaches given with SportHelp?
16. What things do coaches have to do? If they have to complete views, work within the school, plan sessions, teach a sport... do they actually have time develop intangible components like a social worker would?
17. What are the coaches’ core objectives?

Manager’s perceptions about youths’ needs

1. What are the needs of a “SportHelp participant”?
2. Do your views of poor young people’s needs align with SportHelps’ view?

3. What does SportHelp think are the needs of the young people they work with?
4. The MiP (mainstream programme), which is the one that I'm most interested about, views YSPs as fulfilling either prevention or intervention. Has this changed to reflect the development of "life skills", or not really?
5. I could suggest that SportHelp puts a strong onus on the individual (ie, YOU have to learn teamwork), or that if YOU misbehave, you are barred from sport (when they reason they misbehave is likely not their own fault, like a tough family situation). Do you think putting an onus on the individual is particularly helpful in these situations?
6. In all of the documentation I have read, there is no section addressing participant's needs, or what participants have identified as their needs. Do you have some information somewhere about what participants consider their needs, or do you assume to know what their needs are?
7. As an organisation that works with over 1000 young people, some will inevitably struggle to have their needs met. How does SportHelp deal with these cases?

Interview schedule for coaches

Background

1. What pseudonym would you like to adopt?
2. What is your background – how did you become a sports coach, why, and why your choice of sport?
3. What is your coaching philosophy?
4. How would you define your role: are you a sports coach? A sports coach and social worker, equal parts? A sports coach and a teacher?
5. How long have you worked for SportHelp?
6. Why do you work for SportHelp – why not another charity, or sports club?
7. How long have you worked with this school? Did you get a say whether you could work here, or were you allocated to it?
8. What does your role within the charity entail?
9. What ages do you work with, and why?

Perceptions about youths' needs

1. What type of youths are you dealing with?

2. What types of youths do you coach?
3. How would you define a 'SportHelp young person'?
4. A SportHelp youth could, in part, be defined as someone with behavioural difficulties. What type of difficulties are we talking about, and how do you help them improve their behaviour?
5. I understand that youths access programs through a combination of voluntarily offering themselves, and in other instances through being headhunted because of academic, or behavioural difficulties. Could you elaborate on this?
6. What do you think are the needs of the young people you coach?
7. Do you think the young people would agree with what you have just said, or would they claim that their needs are different to what you think?
8. What do you think are the needs of the youths involved in SportHelp?
9. The SportHelp Annual Report 13/14 emphasises behavioural improvement and school attendance as evidence that the sports programs are working. Is that the only thing SportHelp is interested in, or is that as well as the 'SFG' constructs?
10. Do you talk to the young people you coach about what their needs are?
11. How much time do you spend focusing on teaching the sport, and how much time on developing the human being?
12. Why do young people join SportHelp?
13. What do you think young people expect to get from SportHelp?
14. What do you think young people get out of SportHelp?
15. What do you think about how young people's needs are currently measured? Are questionnaires a good way of tapping into what youth's need?
16. A SportHelp coach works to minimise certain risk factors identified by the Youth Justice Board to prevent young people starting on pathways to negative activities. The evaluation focuses on community, school and personal factors.
17. What are youth's needs?

Perceptions / perspective about the charity

1. What is the 'SportHelp way'?
2. How does the partnership between SportHelp and the school work, from your perspective? Are you a bridge of some sort?

3. If you had the capacity, what would you change in the SportHelp strategy to ensure youth's needs are met?
4. Given you are on the ground, actually interacting with young people and acquiring first-hand experience of their needs, how important do you feel your views are to shape the direction the charity moves in?
5. Does SportHelp provide training for coaches in how to meet the needs of young people? Do you receive guidance from the organization on how to meet youth's needs?
6. What do you think of the 'SFG' approach?
7. What is the goal of the 'SFG' approach, in your opinion – to make sure that all the kids leave a SportHelp program with all the 'SFG' capabilities?
8. What would you say your core objectives as a SportHelp coach are?
9. Do you think your core objectives as a coach are the same as other SportHelp coaches in mainstream programs?
10. Does the charity restrict your capacity to help young people? If so, how? (*Sensitive question*).
11. There's an ethos of discipline whereby if you don't behave, you are banned from sport. What do you think about this approach, do you think it works? Is there also a requirement to keep school marks up, otherwise, you are banned (temporarily) from the sport?
12. How do you work with your PM? What does he facilitate?

Coach's practices to meet youths' needs

1. How much freedom, as a coach, do you have to address what you think are the needs of the young people you coach?
2. What is it about your sport that allows you to meet the needs of youths?
3. Do you have any examples of when you were unable to meet the needs of some youths, as a coach with SportHelp?
4. How do you implement the 'SFG' framework? Do you add or subtract anything in your implementation of it?
5. How do you know what needs each young person has, or, said differently, how do you know what aspects of each person could/should be improved?
6. How do you help young people?
7. SDT – how do you coach?

8. How do you work with the school and community to identify kids to work with on your sports program?
9. Look at the coach hours delivery diagram on page 13. The greatest amount of hours is spent on “peripatetic” and “tournament” settings, and then After School Clubs. Do peripatetic sessions aim to develop the needs of young people, or do they aim to do well at a sport? What is the focus?
10. How do you manage your “prevention” and “intervention” populations? How do you work with the school to identify youths from those groups? Or do you work with “talented” kids?
11. How do you develop your coaching sessions? Are they participant centred (so as to meet the needs of young people?)
12. How do you meet young people’s needs, and how do you find out what those needs are?
13. Do you interact with kids outside of the sport session? If they come to you with personal problems, how and when do you deal with them? How do you work with the school to help these kids?

Interview schedule for young people

Background

1. What codename would you like?
2. What ethnicity would you say you are?
3. Age.
4. Tell me about yourself – who are you?
5. How did you get into basketball?
6. How long have you participated with SportHelp?
7. Why did you join SportHelp, and how?
8. How often do you do sport with SportHelp?

Perceptions / perspective about the charity

9. What do you think SportHelp gives you?
10. What do you want to get out of SportHelp?
11. What do you see yourself doing after SportHelp?
12. Why have your teammates joined SportHelp?

13. What do you expect to gain from SportHelp this year?
14. Why do you keep coming to SportHelp?
15. Have you changed, as a person, since you arrived at SportHelp to now? Has SportHelp had anything to do with that change?

Perceptions about youth's needs

16. Tell me about your relationship with coach
17. What role does coach play in your life?
18. Who are the most important people in your life?
19. What is coach's coaching style?
20. What happens when someone gets into trouble in class – is there a basketball-related consequence?
21. What do your parents think about you playing for SportHelp?
22. Would you say your parents and coach teach you similar things?
23. Would you say your teachers and coach teach you similar things?

Other

24. 'SFG': if you have started using it, I'd like to hear your thoughts on it
25. Are you ever asked what you want to do in the sessions?
26. In sessions, are you encouraged to be creative, and take control over what you do?

Appendix three: Published paper from thesis

‘I just can’t bear these procedures, I just want to be out there working with children’: An autoethnography on neoliberalism and youth sports charities in the UK

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Abstract

This paper uses an autoethnography to recount my experiences with SportHelp, a UK youth sports charity. Using a layered account format, which jumps through time and space, I demonstrate the extent to which neoliberal values have influenced the continuity and change of SportHelp. This paper does not constitute an attack on the charity, its staff, nor the charity sector. The focus is on how the wider neoliberal context shapes how SportHelp operates. The findings are analysed in terms of Foucault’s (2008) notion of governmentality by examining SportHelp’s monitoring and reporting practices, as well as the managers’ use of New Public Management discourse. The conclusion reflects on the extent to which neoliberal governmentality, though in some instances beneficial for SportHelp, ultimately does more harm than good. This paper, by offering an ‘insider’s view’, adds to the literature calling for a change in how policy makers and funders shape the current hypercompetitive socio-political landscape. Charities should be supported, not discouraged, to develop holistic programmes that move beyond ‘economic rationales’ and are capable of addressing the multifaceted needs of their service users.

Keywords:

Neoliberalism, Governmentality, Charity, Sport, Young People, Autoethnography.

Introduction

Previous research on youth sport programmes run by community groups or charities has often focused on the programmes themselves, or on a particular aspect of the programme. These studies have ranged from the role coaches play in helping young people develop (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014) to looking at experiences of young people's participation (Bowers & Green, 2013) as well as exploring parents' views of youth sport programmes (Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012). Other research has analysed how youth sports initiatives are used to help disadvantaged or vulnerable youths, and the extent to which these initiatives produce the outcomes they claim (Coalter, 2012; Vandermeerschen, Vos, & Scheerder, 2015). Lastly, some authors have also examined specific aspects of youth sport programmes, such as social inclusion as well as social or cultural capital (Morgan, 2015; Spaaij, 2012).

Comparatively less attention has been paid to how the socio-political context influences the development of youth sports programmes. An examination of how the neoliberal context affects youth sports charities is important because the sport programmes they create do not just 'happen'. The socio-political context shapes how sport programmes are crafted, delivered, and evaluated: 'politics include all processes of governing people and administering policies, at all levels of organisation, both public and private. Therefore, politics are an integral part of sport' (Coakley, 2009, p. 466). Appreciating how neoliberalism influences youth sport charities enables us to understand *how* and *why* sport programmes are developed in particular ways, as well as *why* certain outcomes are championed over others. To illustrate the role context plays, it is worth quoting the recent work done by Thorpe and Rinehart (2013). They looked at two case studies of international action sport NGOs within a neoliberal context and concluded:

... to survive, and indeed thrive, in a competitive market saturated with NGOs and shrinking funding, such organizations [NGOs] are increasingly developing intimate relationships with governmental and/or for-profit organisations, and employing corporate-inspired communication strategies, that resonate strongly with the neoliberal focus on market solutions (e.g., individual responsibility, entrepreneurialism, global trade, transnational corporate branding, the need for sustained economic growth and ongoing development) (p. 134).

To build upon Thorpe and Rinehart's analysis, I have used an autoethnography to explore the influence neoliberal governmentality has on the change and continuity of the UK youth sports charity SportHelp. According to the Charity Commission (2013), a charity in England and Wales is an organisation that (a) aligns with one of thirteen 'charitable purposes' (like the 'relief of youths in need'), and (b) is for the public benefit. SportHelp's contribution to the 'public benefit' stems from their remit: supporting the psychosocial development of socio-economically disadvantaged youths (8-18 years old) through sport.

These sport sessions are led by qualified coaches who aim to teach their sport and instil ‘life skills’ (positive psychosocial attributes and behaviours such as teamwork – Weiss et al., 2014).

I should be clear about what this paper is and what it is not. I am neither launching an attack on SportHelp, nor am I discrediting the youth sports charity sector. This paper expands on the work of previous authors (e.g., Chouinard & Crooks, 2008; Egdell, Dutton, & McQuaid, 2016) by continuing to explore the tensions between neoliberal values and the voluntary sector. Whilst shaping the change and continuity of charities according to competition and marketisation principles can be favourable (it may allow organisations who conform to secure more funds for their programmes), the approach incurs significant drawbacks (such as developing frameworks that pander to the wants of funders instead of to the needs of young people). To ‘capture’ the influence of a neoliberal ethos on SportHelp’s growth, I have relied on Foucault’s (2008) concept of governmentality. Consequently, my paper contributes to existing knowledge within the youth sport and charity literatures by offering an ‘insider’s view’ of how embedded ‘businessisation’ is within SportHelp. Through my stories, I aim for readers to emotionally connect with the reality SportHelp managers contend with *en route* to fulfilling the charity’s goal: to support the psychosocial development of socio-economically disadvantaged young people. Hopefully, this paper can influence policy, both in the youth sports charity sector and beyond, by allowing (and encouraging!) charities to create more holistic frameworks capable of addressing the multifaceted needs of young people.

Autoethnography and stories as a research method

An autoethnography entails inserting the self (auto) into the study (graphy) of social and cultural phenomena (ethno) (Liggins, Kearns, & Adams, 2013). Whilst a defining characteristic of autoethnographies is ‘the use of personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience’ (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 22), not all personal writing can be considered autoethnographic. According to Jones et al. (2013), autoethnographies are defined by four characteristics. The first is that ‘autoethnographies comment or critique on cultural practices’ (p. 22). By using perspectives (gathered through field work and interviews) other than my own, my autoethnography critiques the influence of neoliberal governmentality on the youth sports charity SportHelp. Secondly, in providing this critique through a novel lens – an ‘insider’s view’ – my autoethnography ‘make[s] a contribution to existing research’ (p. 23).

A third aspect of autoethnographies is that they ‘embrace vulnerability with a purpose’ (p. 24). From the start of my stories, I present myself as a vulnerable person whose expectations of the youth sport charity sector are challenged. The purpose of my vulnerability is to illustrate SportHelp’s struggles to

survive in a competitive landscape characterised by neoliberal policies and a business ethos. Lastly, ‘autoethnographies create reciprocity in order to compel a response’ (p. 24). My paper is driven by the desire to engage with readers, and to encourage them to think and feel about a topic in a way they might have otherwise not done so. To do this, I have used the framework of an ‘evocative autoethnography’ where I could infuse emotions into my narrative (Ellis, 1991, 1997). These emotions, centred on how my expectations of SportHelp were subverted, were central to my experience. Consequently, through my story, I wish to empower the reader to ‘vicariously live an experience’ (Rambo Ronai, 1992, p. 123) in the youth sports charity world.

Many criticisms have been levelled towards the autoethnographic approach. Whilst Coffey (1999) has claimed autoethnographies are self-indulgent, Ellis et al. (2011) outlined how other authors have dismissed the method’s supposed lack of rigour and theoretical robustness. The purpose of this paper is not to defend the approach – that has been done elsewhere (see Rambo Ronai, 1995; Sparkes, 2000, 2002). Instead, I wish to add to the existing autoethnographic accounts in both the charity and sport literature. Previously, Coghlan (2012) used a three-day charity cycling event to explore participants’ experiences at an event which intersects the disciplines of charities, tourism, and sport. Elsewhere, whilst Purdy, Potrac and Jones (2008) analysed the athlete-coach relationship in competitive rowing through the lens of power and resistance, McMahon and DinanThompson (2011) explored the regulatory practices (at times imposed by the self) on elite swimmers’ bodies. My paper, amongst other topics, builds on the themes of regulatory practices (by discussing neoliberal governmentality), resistance (to neoliberal governmentality), and the intersection of charities and sport. Consequently, my autoethnography aims to stimulate a conversation which further explores the nexus between youth sport charities and neoliberalism.

Writing my story and analysing it

To share my stories I have used the layered account format (Rambo Ronai, 1992, 1995). This framework eschews the chronological story-telling approach where events are described from start to finish. Instead, I jump through time and space to offer an account of my ‘lived experience’. Each of these shifts is denoted by ‘***’. A particular strength of the layered account is it does not claim that one version of events is superior to the rest. I strive to convey my lived experience as ‘an acceptable-to-me-for-the-moment portrayal’ (Rambo Ronai, 1995, p. 398), and acknowledge my stories do not constitute the only or ‘right’ interpretation of events.

My layered narrative encompasses the two periods of time I spent with SportHelp: a 4-month placement with SportHelp followed by a subsequent 8-month data generation period for my PhD. The gap

between the end of my placement and start of data generation was six months. During the placement, I was employed (and paid) by SportHelp to produce a literature review and devise a questionnaire on the topics SportHelp chose. For my data generation period, I was neither paid nor guided by SportHelp's goals; I conducted my own research. Therefore, my stories were crafted from a combination of personal reflections, observations, and semi-structured interviews. These interviews lasted an average of an hour, were conducted on SportHelp's premises, and featured five managers and four sports coaches. In turn, my stories were analysed using thematic analysis, an approach often used in autoethnographic research (Coghlan, 2012; Ellis, 2004). My stories are presented together, and subsequently analysed as a whole.

Judging criteria for autoethnographies are fluid because 'they are generated in the doing of this writing rather than outside or prior to it' (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 773). Since validity and reliability are not suited to judge autoethnographies (Sparkes, 2009), I have echoed Carless and Sparkes' (2008) approach by providing a list of criteria that can help readers judge my work. For Richardson (1994), an autoethnography should (1) help us understand a social phenomenon and its importance, and (2) inspire the reader and encourage them to generate questions. If at the end of this paper the reader has a greater sense of how neoliberal governmentality influences SportHelp, and, in turn, is asking themselves new questions (such as 'are charities run like businesses better charities?'), my autoethnography has been successful. To these judgement criteria I add two more: 'personal narrative and storytelling as an obligation to critique' (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 773) and 'evocation and emotion as incitements to action' (p. 773). To achieve the former, readers should judge my autoethnography based on my capacity to critique neoliberal governmentality and its influence on SportHelp. Furthermore, if the emotionality in my work prompts readers 'to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something, to act' (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 433), even if it is to view or think of charities and their struggles in a different light, my autoethnography will have achieved its purpose.

Given my autoethnography knits my vulnerabilities with a 'behind-the-scenes' view of SportHelp, I was careful to adhere to Tullis' (2013) ethical recommendations. I protected myself from harm by not putting myself in compromising situations, and I protected SportHelp and its staff from harm by anonymising all names with pseudonyms. Furthermore, I gained written informed consent from both SportHelp and the managers who feature in my stories. I secured this informed consent for my stint as a placement student, and subsequently for my PhD data collection phase. Despite having this consent, I was aware this autoethnography could (incorrectly) be interpreted as being highly critical of SportHelp. Publishing it without subjecting the paper to a member check (allowing SportHelp to read the article) would have been unethical, and could have potentially contravened the 'do no harm' principle. I sent the article to Dane, my main contact in SportHelp and a prominent figure in the autoethnography, for him to corroborate.

This member check also served to comply with another of Tullis' (2013) guidelines: do not publish anything you would not show to the persons mentioned in the text.

I was excited to begin collaborating with SportHelp. Since landing in the UK as an undergraduate student, I had come to appreciate the importance charities play in UK society. In comparison with my home country, Spain, charities in the UK were everywhere! It was amazing: every town I visited had a charity shop. Learning about charity reports and research through major news outlets ceased to be a novelty. I even normalised the fact that people were willing to run absurdly long distances in fancy dress to 'raise funds for charity'! This surface-level relationship I developed with the UK's 'charity scene' shaped my perception of both the UK's voluntary sector and society: I sensed a deep care to help those in need. Whilst corporations and government seemed primarily concerned with profit making and efficiency, charities appeared to prioritise human beings. It felt like charities operated in a bubble, untarnished by the competitive pressures that plagued big businesses. I was eager to form part of this charity bubble!

As I walked into SportHelp's headquarters, a sea of desks populated with laptops and accompanied by black leather swivel chairs coolly stared back at me. I hesitated. I wasn't expecting this. I wasn't sure what I expected... but something less 'office-y'. Less 'consultancy-looking'. Then again, this was my first contact with a charity. I re-grouped by reminding myself to keep an open mind. Whilst I absorbed the 'professional' atmosphere, Dane, my point of contact within SportHelp, cheerfully rushed over to greet me. Dane was a middle manager who worked on the evaluation branch of the charity. As he showed me around the offices, he introduced me to his colleagues by enthusiastically saying "Ioannis is doing his PhD!" Staff generally reacted by looking impressed, which made me uncomfortable. I didn't think getting a degree was more impressive than making a difference in young people's lives...

Natalie, a long-standing trustee in the charity with a background in finance, passionately recounted SportHelp's history. It all started with providing young people living on estates with the opportunity to play sport during the summer. Over the span of more than a decade, the organisation blossomed and evolved. At first, "it was more seat-of-the-pants, it was quite opportunistic" Natalie recalled, with a degree of nostalgia. "As the charity grows, you become more professional" she added. The word 'professional' echoed in my mind. That's precisely the vibe I had picked up when I first walked into SportHelp's offices. But it felt 'wrong' to describe a charity as 'professional'. I thought 'professional' was a word often associated to corporate businesses? However, if a charity isn't 'professional', does it mean it is

‘unprofessional’? That’s certainly not the case... so maybe there’s nothing wrong with SportHelp being ‘professional’?

I was fascinated to learn that SportHelp’s core objective had not changed since the charity’s inception: to help socio-economically disadvantaged young people by using sport. What was even more astounding was that I could not find a single ‘defector’ from the SportHelp cause. All the staff I spoke to proudly believed in the power of sport for good. And this was not about parroting the party line. I felt uplifted: yes! This is what a charity is all about, right? A group of people, energetically rowing in the same direction with the goal of helping others! This is what I expected! However, whilst the SportHelp staff ‘knew’ how powerful sport could be to help young people, they needed a new way to evaluate and ‘prove’ the impact of their programmes. This precipitated a four-year organisational shift. That’s why I was brought on board; to help with this process.

The new way of evaluating programmes required changing the charity’s ‘business strategy’. Again, my ears perked up. ‘Business strategy’? Isn’t that a term corporations use? As a member of the Evaluation Team, Dane and his colleagues struggled to accurately ‘capture’ SportHelp’s results in a way funders could easily grasp. As important as this is for SportHelp’s economic survivability, it was not what truly drove Dane: “I want to represent the work that coaches do on a day to day basis, and, equally, the improvement that the young people show” he said. “To capture that is nigh on impossible, but I’m going to have a bloody good go at doing it!” Dane seemed caught between worlds. He wanted the best for his charity, but he was also fully aware that producing results tailored to funders is fundamental to evidence SportHelp’s impact and secure future funding. “The balance of power between us and the funder is very much in their favour, to the point that you are not necessarily jumping through hoops, but we certainly know where to jump and when to jump”, Dane confessed.

At the core of the new business strategy was a bespoke framework SportHelp developed, ‘Sport For Good’ (SFG). Dane explained the three-pronged purpose of the framework: to shun previously used ‘off-the-shelf’ measurement tools, to create an approach tailored to SportHelp’s service users, and to become ‘unique’ amongst the charity’s competitors. Whilst retaining the goal of helping young people through sport, this framework altered how that goal was met. SFG used sport as a vehicle to teach life skills, specifically twelve life skills (such as ‘leadership’, ‘determination’, and ‘self-discipline’¹⁰⁷). Dane fantasised about his vision for SFG, namely, to build an “organisational currency, whereby we can almost buy, or sell, or trade, in SFG, almost like you would do on the stock market, because it has that almost

¹⁰⁷ To protect the anonymity of the charity, I have not disclosed all the elements in the framework.

explicit, tangible existence”. He seemed comfortable using ‘business-speak’, which, in turn, made me realise that I was not *as* uncomfortable hearing ‘business-speak’ as I had been initially. Did this mean I was internalising and normalising talking about a charity in business terms?

My task, Dane explained, was to produce a literature review about each of the twelve life skills in SFG, as well as constructing a questionnaire SportHelp could use to measure SFG’s components in its service users. That way, SportHelp could compile SFG scores of its users at the start and end of the year, and attribute youths’ improvement to the charity’s work. I could see how this approach would make results easily communicable to funders. However, as I went home that day, my head was spinning. My expectations of how a UK charity operated seemed divorced from reality. I had met passionate charity employees who spoke about ‘business plans’ and ‘business strategies’. One manager even remarked they wanted SportHelp to become a ‘market leader’ of the youth sport charity sector. SportHelp appeared to be stuck between two worlds: they weren’t a corporate business, but needed to operate like one. I did not feel like this charity was in a protective bubble, devoid of efficiency or competitive worries. Quite the contrary. SportHelp was vulnerable... very vulnerable. Was this the same for the rest of UK sports charities?

I was curious about what instigated the new ‘Sport For Good’ framework. According to Dane, it started with a major consultancy firm who “wanted to feel good about themselves and thus do some consultancy work for third sector organisations”. Though somewhat sceptical of the firm’s underlying motives, Dane highlighted the value of this *pro-bono* work for SportHelp’s business strategy. “They were, as you can imagine, quite hot on measurables, being involved in finance and strategy and stuff like that, as they are. They kind of heightened our awareness of OK, we pay by results and you need to start generating your own results, and own your results. That started the ball rolling”. Had the consultancy inculcated a ‘business-speak’ culture in SportHelp managers, or was it there already? Regardless, I soon realised just how influential big city businesses had been on both the charity and the development of SFG.

It was Natalie, the long-standing trustee, who offered a greater glimpse of the historical *pro-bono* work SportHelp had received from “very professional organisations”. These included banks, consultancy firms, firms that specialised in corporate evaluation, and an umbrella organisation that determined which charities were “worthy recipients” of either funds or help. I was overwhelmed. SportHelp had received a substantial amount of corporate input towards shaping its ‘business strategy’! Though Natalie acknowledged that some corporates’ behaviour was “misguided”, she felt there was “a lot more willingness to go out and help”. Like Dane, she was comfortable using ‘business-speak’. The discomfort I experienced when I first heard Dane and Natalie speak in business terms resurfaced... but it was tempered by yet another

realisation. These major companies do not support *every* charity. Which means they either help those that have a worthy cause and are doing a good job, or those organisations with high stocks of social capital. SportHelp appeared to tick all three boxes, particularly given the trustees' connections to the business world! So... was it possible that more corporate support led to better evidenced outcomes, which led to further corporate support, which resulted in better programmes? Could operating like a business actually improve SportHelp's work?

Emily described herself as an "ethical fundraiser" who refused to be donor led. She was conscientious, and deeply believed in SportHelp's goal. She was keen to protect SportHelp's mission from corruption by avoiding dependency on a single, major donor (and thus becoming a puppet of them). Instead, SportHelp sourced funds from corporate partners (such as banks and consultancy firms), trusts, foundations, and national governing bodies. But how to define 'corruption'? With the development of SFG, SportHelp had retained its central goal but had been influenced by funders and big businesses on *how* to meet their goal. Does that constitute corruption? After all, Emily described how funding from Corporate Social Responsibility budgets big companies wield is often "connected a bit to what the corporate does, and a lot of corporate funding is connected to employability and skills training". Is instilling life skills in young people just about employability and skills training? My view of charities in a clear bubble was rapidly changing. I was caught in between the murky lines of charities and businesses. Did the adoption of a business ethos corrupt SportHelp's path, and, more importantly, did it matter as long as the charity helped their service users?

I was stuck in a cognitive dissonance rut. SportHelp had to compromise, and adopt business principles, to grow. I asked Dane a tough question: was there a possibility that the results SportHelp sought were tailored more towards the funders wants than the young people's needs? Dane paused for a moment, and sighed:

"Yeah, I completely agree. There's a lot of... it's, to be honest, if I was being crude, it would be borderline hypocrisy. What our main challenge is, is to balance the needs of the people who pay for the programmes to be there in the first place with the needs of the people who access the programmes. I think there are a lot of underlying, slightly naïve assumptions about the nature of the issues and the issues the young people encounter, and that's naivety from us, but also from funders, so they will pay on outcomes that are completely impossible to deliver, or don't make a great deal of relevance. The whole sort of, they call it the 'bums on seats approach', whereby lots of funders, big funders, will fund just through people come through the door. How many people

have you had come through the door in the last six months? Oh, 100? Well, get it up to 120 in 3 months' time, brilliant. 120? Done. Have your money. But that doesn't make a great deal of sense when we are talking about sport for development. It is actually more difficult to develop people the more people you have on your programme. These are the kinds of things we are constantly battling against."

Dane's honesty powerfully struck me, and made me appreciate his plight. As much as he, and SportHelp, cared about young people and wanting to help them, I sensed that goal was trumped by a more immediate issue. Survivability. Whilst the 'Sport For Good' framework was aimed at supporting young people, the strategy had an underlying – and crucial – goal: "the whole point of SFG is to demonstrate that what we do has positive impact, so we can raise more money". Beatrice, SportHelp's Chief Operating Officer, was unequivocal in her analysis. More money means more programmes, which means more capacity to help youths. And it worked, too. SportHelp's success centrally stemmed from embracing their business strategy, as Natalie confided in me: "when you talk to funders, the feedback to us is that they are very impressed about what we are doing".

As I said good-bye to Dane and the SportHelp managers, I walked away with a bittersweet sensation. I was troubled by the extent to which my expectations of the charity scene had been subverted. Had the adoption of business principles by charities been there all along, since I landed in the UK in 2006? As sceptical as I am of the 'altruistic' actions of big businesses – akin to Dane and Emily - corporate influence on SportHelp benefitted the charity by helping them secure more funds, thus prolonging their work with youths. But a burning question lingered: did the ends justify the means? As my initial clear cut perceptions between a corporate business and a charity blurred, I could only wonder... can a charity that operates like a business *actually* become a better charity?

Since the 1980s, the UK voluntary sector has increasingly been reformed to align with market values (Bruce & Chew, 2011). These values are often grouped under the banner of 'neoliberalism'. Neoliberalism is a political and economic philosophy which has become one of the dominant ideologies in the western world (Steger & Roy, 2010). At the core of neoliberalism is the sacrosanct principle of the free market. For the free market to operate successfully, supply and demand should be driven by unrestricted competition. Akin to how the animal kingdom regulates itself through survival of the fittest, the market should not be influenced by any external force (such as government) attempting to shape or constrain it (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Market 'fitness' is determined by the capacity to accumulate financial capital

(Brown, 2003), or, at the very least, not run out of it. In short, the strongest in the jungle – the market – will survive whilst the weak will perish.

Neoliberal ideals emerged in the 1970s in the Chicago School as a counter-movement to Keynesian welfare (Palley, 2005). This ‘new’ liberalism was based on the values of classical liberalism, which upheld individual freedom (Locke, 1689) and the existence of a free market where labour and items could be exchanged (Smith, 1776). What separates neoliberalism from classical liberalism is the proliferation of ‘ruthless competitive individualism’ (Giroux, 2005, p. 8) and the rise of the ‘enterprise society’ (Lazzarato, 2009). As an ‘enterprise society’, every service or institution has to be reconfigured to align with free market values. The solution to the lack of a particular market is to create one (Harvey, 2005), even in the case of institutions that do not naturally align with business values, such as education or health. The third sector, which encompasses charities (like SportHelp), is no exception to this trend (Buckingham, 2009; Davies, 2013; Fyfe, 2005). However, neoliberalism is a nebulous term: it is rare to encounter a self-proclaimed neoliberal. To conceptualise such a diffuse subject, I will examine the influence of neoliberalism on SportHelp through the lens of governmentality (Foucault, 2008).

By governmentality, Foucault refers to the social and political forces that guide our behaviours and attitudes as individuals. More specifically, *neoliberal* governmentality refers to the social and political forces that guide our behaviours and attitudes as individuals *in relation to free market values*. These ‘forces’ (also known as ‘technologies’ or ‘rationalities’) are not neutral (Larner & Butler, 2005); they shape charities like SportHelp through specific processes:

This governmentality perspective sheds further light on the processes of organisational change, demonstrating how monitoring and reporting processes can operate as ‘technologies’ for exerting government power at a distance by normalising particular preferred approaches or procedures within the voluntary sector (Buckingham, 2009, p. 245).

What prompted SportHelp’s development of SFG was the need to carefully monitor and report their work with young people. Monitoring a charity programme in itself is not new, and it certainly pre-dates the neoliberal epoch. However, what is part of the neoliberal package is the increased pressure to monitor and report through calculation and measurement (Larner & Butler, 2005). This is not only a symptom of neoliberal governmentality inculcating an ‘economic rationale’ in charities; it is also a consequence of the intensification of competition for funds and contracts in the voluntary sector (Davies, 2013). As much as SportHelp wanted me to develop a questionnaire for the ‘Sport For Good’ framework that could positively serve their young participants, the charity needed a tool that would help guarantee their survival. This is

precisely what Beatrice, the Chief Operating Officer, summarised when she said ‘the whole point of SFG is to demonstrate that what we do has positive impact, so we can raise more money’.

Another aspect of neoliberal governmentality that shaped the SFG framework is ‘responsibilised autonomy’ (Morison, 2000, p. 119): ‘the sector is being encouraged to exercise a “responsibilised autonomy” and pursue its interests through a framework where the “systems of thought” and “systems of action” emphasise and reinforce an economic rationality alongside the more traditional welfare ethos’. SportHelp’s realisation that they needed to ‘own their results’, as Dane put it, constitutes this ‘responsibilised autonomy’. By creating the SFG framework, SportHelp designed a bespoke approach tailored to the charity’s goals. This ensured SportHelp’s previous practice, shoehorning existing ‘off-the-shelf’ frameworks to align with the charity’s mission, was no longer observed. In this light, it is hard to argue with the benefits of ‘responsibilised autonomy’ – it is an example (echoing Buckingham’s, 2009, findings) of the positive influence neoliberal governmentality can have on charities. However, developing SFG whilst adhering to an ‘economic rationale’ of measurement and calculation arguably limited the benefits the framework could offer young people.

Despite the multiple benefits the SFG framework provides for young people, neoliberal governmentality curtailed these benefits in two ways. The first is through the possible and unintentional ‘oppression’ of young people:

Pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. It is an instrument of dehumanization (Freire, 2003, p. 54).

Whilst ‘oppressors’, ‘egoistic’ and ‘false paternalism’ in SportHelp’s case are at best unnecessarily strong descriptors, and at worst, untrue characterisations of the charity’s motives, Freire’s ideas reflect the dangers of a competitive, neoliberal landscape. As I discussed earlier, the core purpose of SFG was to evidence SportHelp’s work and, in turn, support the charity’s ‘egoistic’ economic survival. Again, the term ‘egoistic’ must not be taken at surface value: SportHelp’s interest in survival was not for their own sake, it was for the young people’s. Nevertheless, this still places the charity’s survival needs ahead of service users’ needs. This is an issue Dane hinted at in his discussion of ‘borderline hypocrisy’ in relation to the balance of funders and youths’ needs. Clearly, ‘Sport For Good’ was designed to help young people, but without creating a framework capable of securing funds in the first place, there would be no possibility to support youths.

The second way in which neoliberal governmentality constrained the development of SFG was in the contents of the framework. Whilst none of the twelve life skills in the framework particularly lend

themselves easily to measurement, they arguably are more ‘measurable’ than other concepts like empathy or care. This is not because ‘teamwork’ is inherently more quantifiable than ‘empathy’, it is because ‘teamwork’ is more aligned to what major donors and funders expect as outputs and outcomes. In addition to the substantive *pro-bono* work SportHelp received from big city consultancy and banking firms, Emily described how Corporate Social Responsibility budgets are ‘connected to employability and skills training’. Consequently, if SportHelp wanted to appeal to neoliberal funders, they needed a neoliberal framework which highlighted the correlation between personally responsible choices and a person’s outcomes (Kumar, 2012). This approach is reflected in SFG: higher scores on each of the twelve life skills (which indicate a young person is making the right choices) correlate with being a good citizen. Even ‘teamwork’ was treated individually by asking questions in the vein of ‘how good are you at teamwork?’

Alternative frameworks of human development are at odds with neoliberal values, and thus, with the majority of organisations (government and corporations) which can provide sustainable funding. For instance, no charity can quantify or measure ‘helping’ youths in terms of Noddings’ (1984) notion of care. For her, care is specific to each individual and cannot be prescriptive. By developing a framework built upon life skills like ‘teamwork’ and ‘leadership’ (terms likelier to form part of a marketised, corporate vocabulary), SportHelp have been able to effectively present their credentials to the free market, thus ‘demonstrating’ their social worth. This is precisely what led Natalie to suggest that ‘when you talk to funders, the feedback to us is that they are very impressed about what we are doing’. Consequently, neoliberal governmentality inconspicuously nudges charities into a corner by suggesting that it is in charities’ own interests to abide by the free market’s rules.

In addition to shaping SportHelp’s monitoring and reporting practices (the SFG framework), neoliberal governmentality sculpted the charity’s ethos through the influence of New Public Management (NPM). NPM refers to the focus on management, target setting, and efficiency practices which the UK voluntary sector has been subject to since the 1980s (Bevir, Rhodes, & Weller, 2003). NPM constitutes the application of business principles to the voluntary sector; what Bruce and Chew (2011) call the ‘businessisation’ of charity management. A key component of NPM and ‘businessisation’ is ‘professionalisation’, which, in turn, is an integral aspect of neoliberal governmentality (Laurie & Bondi, 2012). ‘Professionalisation’ in the voluntary sector entails

... hierarchical, bureaucratic structures with internal divisions of labour between managers, welfare professionals and volunteers. They [professionalised charities] tend to develop more passive forms of citizenship, where service users are consumers of welfare delivered by a professionalised workforce of paid staff and highly trained volunteers (Fyfe, Timbrell, & Smith, 2006, p. 637).

Natalie's description of how SportHelp used to be more 'opportunistic' and had subsequently grown to become 'more professional' resonates with Fyfe, Timbrell, and Smith's definition of 'professional organisations'. As I recounted throughout the autoethnography, SportHelp's 'professionalisation' was largely influenced by the substantial *pro-bono* work the charity received from corporate businesses. This influence appeared to normalise managers' use of what George Orwell could have termed 'business-speak'. There were frequent allusions to SportHelp's 'business strategy', 'business plan' or becoming a 'market leader'. Dane fantasised about the future value of SFG in relation to 'buy, or sell, or trade, in SFG, almost like you would do on the stock market'. These data illustrate how entrenched NPM values are in the charity, and how normalised they have become. Despite my temporary collaboration with SportHelp, I too succumbed to NPM. My initial surprise at hearing managers discuss the charity in business terms gradually ebbed away, and became relatively normal by the end of my tenure with SportHelp.

The internalisation of NPM through neoliberal governmentality is precisely what makes the process particularly insidious, as Foucault and numerous commentators have observed (e.g. Ball, 2000; Lorenz, 2012; Rose, 2000). Neoliberal values have become commonplace inconspicuously and without coercion. The free market has become the default setting. The logic of applying a business model to all services, such as charities, is so ordinary it is largely unquestioned. How else could SportHelp successfully operate if it were neither 'professional' nor business-like? To survive in a market economy, SportHelp must play by the rules of the market. However, it is important to remember these market rules – inculcated through neoliberal governmentality – are not neutral:

... the good practice guides, transferable models, and evaluations now proliferating in the social sector are not simply neutral tools; they are governmental techniques that represent and help constitute governmental spaces and subjects in particular forms (Larner & Butler, 2005, p. 81).

Despite the power of neoliberal governmentality, it is not simply a top-down, one-way process – charities can shape neoliberal governmentality (Morison, 2000) by embracing certain benefits whilst resisting more toxic aspects. For instance, though Dane and Emily were sceptical of the motives behind big business founders or *pro-bono* work, they acknowledged it as a necessary by-product of securing sustainable funding for the charity. Dane's struggle to 'capture' the sports coaches' work, in spite of major donors' advocacy for a 'bums on seats' approach, echoes Williams, Cloke, and Thomas' (2012, p. 1487) analysis: 'what actually happens on the ground is contingent on the interaction of rationalities and technologies on the one hand, and the agency of both practitioners and clients on the other'. Resistance also came in the form of the charity's coaches who disliked the 'Sport For Good' framework because they felt they were being told how to coach. Unfortunately, I did not have space in the autoethnography to unpack this issue, nor to remark how another group of coaches embraced SFG as a toolkit they could use to teach

intangible concepts like ‘leadership’. These data illustrate the complexity of neoliberal governmentality as more than a mere top-down force. There are positive aspects to it, as well as the possibility to shape governance and resist it.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper is to illustrate how a neoliberal context influences the change and continuity of the UK youth sports charity SportHelp. Through sharing my story, I hope to have depicted the extent to which neoliberal governmentality (Foucault, 2008) shaped SportHelp’s development and operation as a charity. By relying on Foucault’s notion of governmentality I was able to ‘capture’ the intangible influence of neoliberalism. This influence is neither obvious nor overt: ‘for any system of thought to become dominant, it requires the articulation of fundamental concepts that become so deeply embedded in common-sense understandings that they are taken for granted and beyond question’ (Harvey, 2007, p. 24). Consequently, the conceptual structure of neoliberal governmentality enabled me to examine SportHelp’s new approach towards monitoring and reporting (via the creation of the ‘Sport For Good’ framework) as well as SportHelp’s use of New Public Management discourse.

This paper is not at attack on SportHelp, its staff, or its mission. SportHelp just want to help socio-economically disadvantaged young people. Unfortunately, neoliberal governmentality has shaped what constitutes ‘help’ and what type of frameworks can be used to provide it. Though neoliberal values have yielded some positives for SportHelp (such as the development of SFG as a tool for coaches, or increased support from corporate bodies that has resulted in the charity growing and aiding more young people), it is difficult to ignore the constraints ‘businessisation’ places on SportHelp. The needs to constantly set goals, adhere to procedures, and monitor outcomes have implications on the change and continuity of the charity; these needs stifle the possibility of creating more holistic solutions that may better serve SportHelp’s young people (Ilan & Baskok, 2004, cited in Buckingham, 2009). Whilst considering goals, procedures, and monitoring as part of operating a charity pre-date the neoliberal epoch, it is the neoliberal increase in competition that exacerbates the importance attributed to those elements. As a result, ‘professionalisation’ can be disempowering (Fyfe et al., 2006). I recall a particularly poignant moment when Natalie talked about how Thomas, SportHelp’s founder and Chief Executive Officer, would at times ‘throw his hands in the air and exclaim “I just can’t bear these procedures, I just want to be out there working with children and not writing bloody procedures!”’

How can we be sure that neoliberal governmentality shaped SportHelp’s ethos? It is possible that SportHelp’s influential decision makers were hired because of their existing neoliberal beliefs. However,

debating this issue at length misses the point; there is a growing body of research highlighting the systemic problem of neoliberal governmentality infiltrating the change and continuity of organisations in different spheres of society, such as NGOs (Thorpe & Rinehart, 2013) or education (Ball, 2012; Brown, 2015; Carr, 2016). Therefore, this paper's use of an 'insider's view' of how a neoliberal ethos influences SportHelp's development illustrates how current policies, aimed at enhancing competition, do not necessarily produce the results government and funders think they do. Whilst there is value in charities identifying tangible outputs and outcomes, an over-emphasis on quantification and competition discourages charities from creating holistic frameworks entirely suited to the psychosocial development of young people (which is largely immeasurable). Instead, charitable organisations need to prioritise survival by adapting their 'business strategy' to economic rationales. At the end of the day, charities fundamentally want to help fellow human beings. They should be supported, not hindered. The change and continuity of a charitable organisation should not be driven by worries of how to survive; it should be propelled by the desire to meet young peoples' needs.

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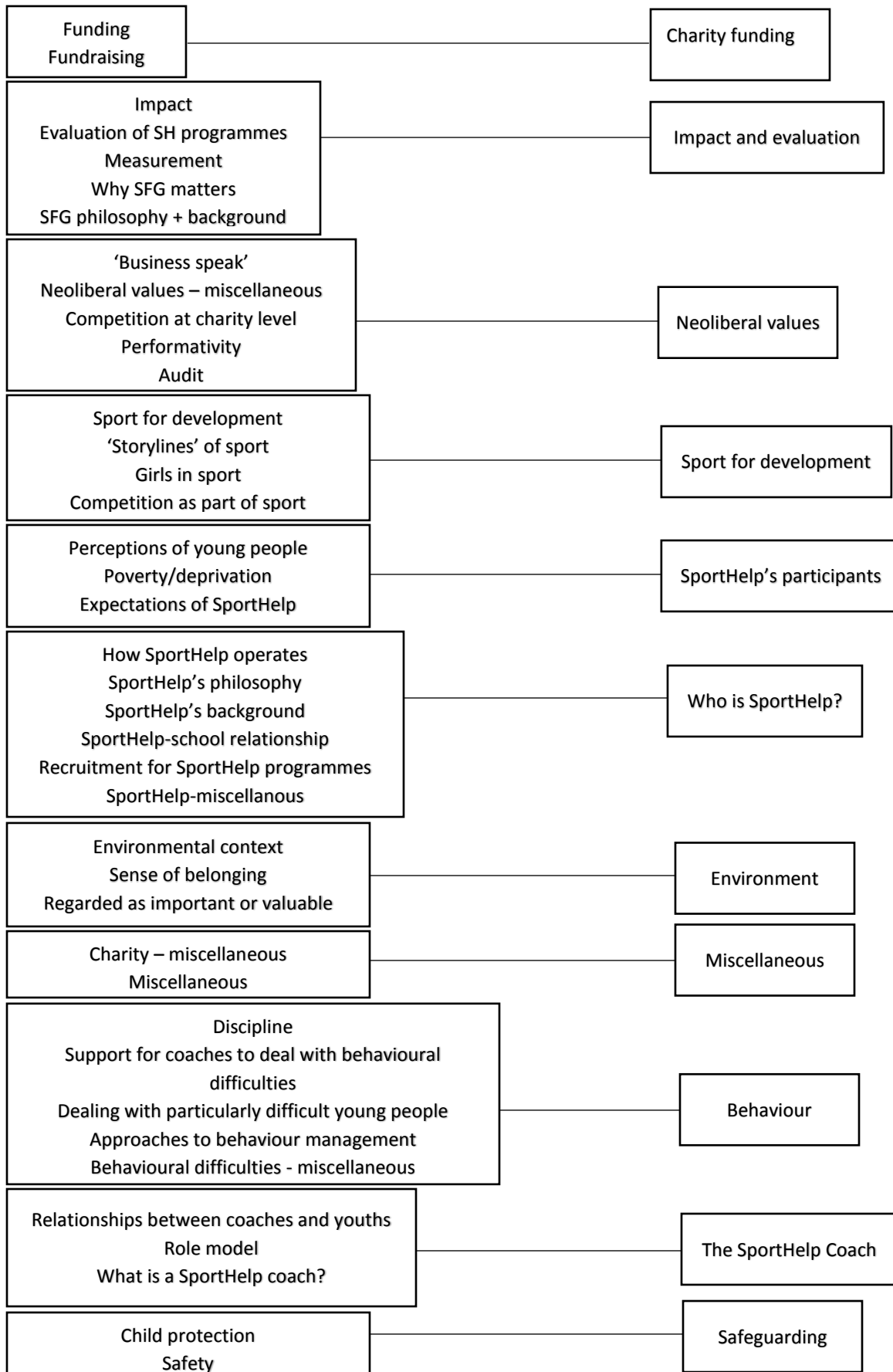
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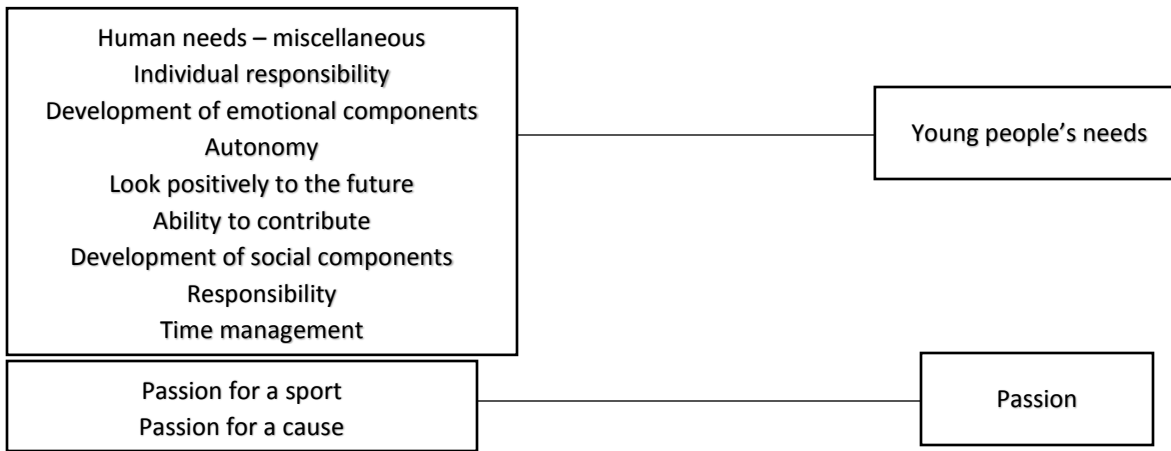
Appendix four: Diagrammatic representation of data analysis

Braun & Clarke's (2006) steps for thematic analysis	Analysis iteration	Documents being worked on	Notes
Step 1: Familiarising yourself with your data			Transcribing and reading the interviews.
Step 2: Generating initial codes	1	All	First round of coding on a master file. Codes generated from theory (initially) and transcripts.
	2	All	Second round of generating codes from the transcripts.
	3	M C YP	Master file codes split into three: Managers' , Coaches' , and Young People's codes.
	4	M C YP	Further coding within each file.
Step 3: Searching for themes	5	M C YP	First search for themes within each file. 36 themes emerged.
Step 4: Reviewing themes	6+7	M C YP	Refining of themes: reduced from 36 to 17.
	8+9	OBSV	I created a fourth document featuring the 17 theme names. I looked at my observation data through the lens of the 17 themes, and categorised my observation data according to the themes.
Step 5: Defining and naming themes	10	M + C + YP + OBSV = FINAL	Combination of all four documents with themes into a master file, where I defined and named the final 11 themes.
Step 6: Producing the report			Writing the results chapter unpacking 11 themes.

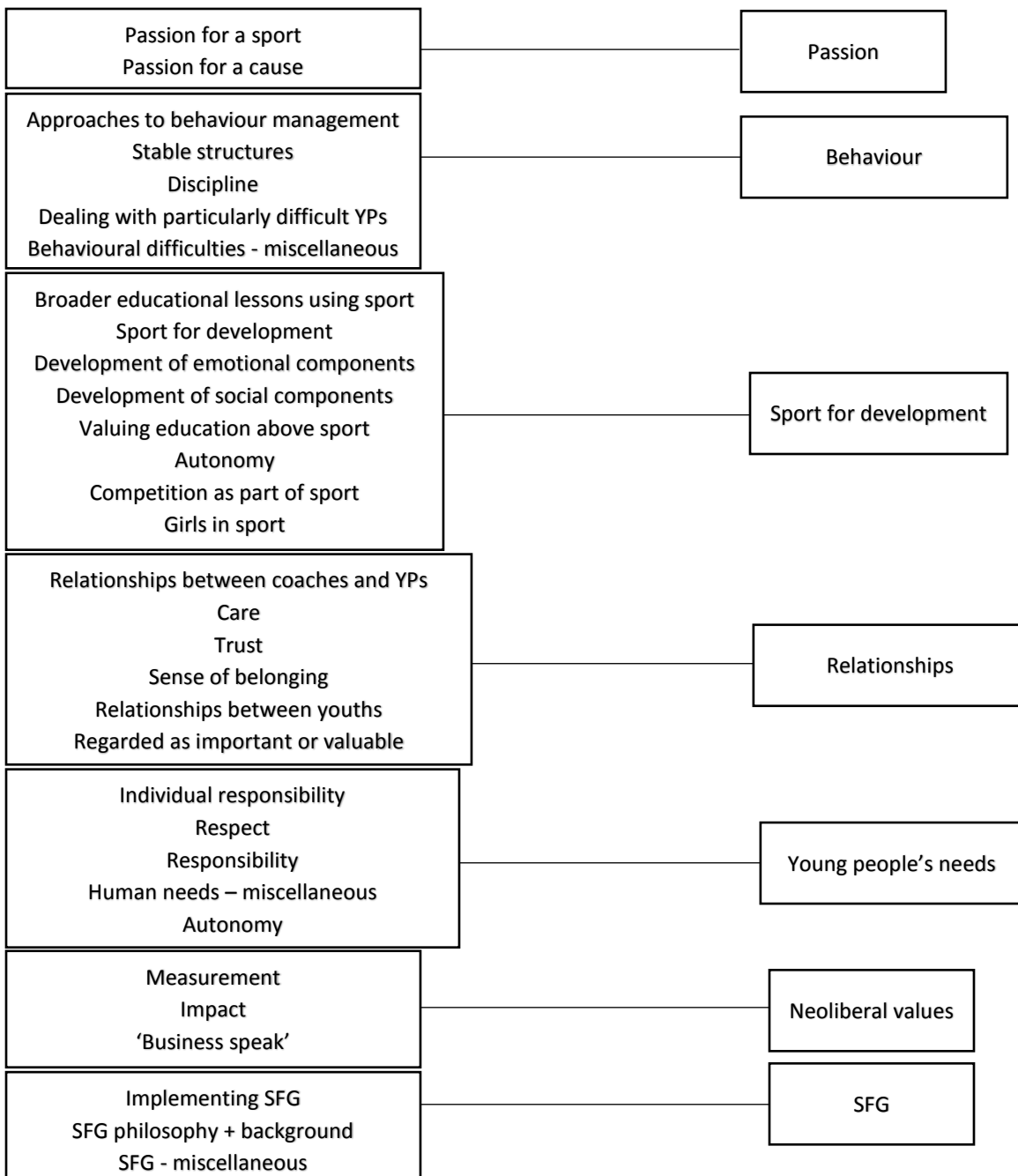
Iteration 5: Total of 36 themes.

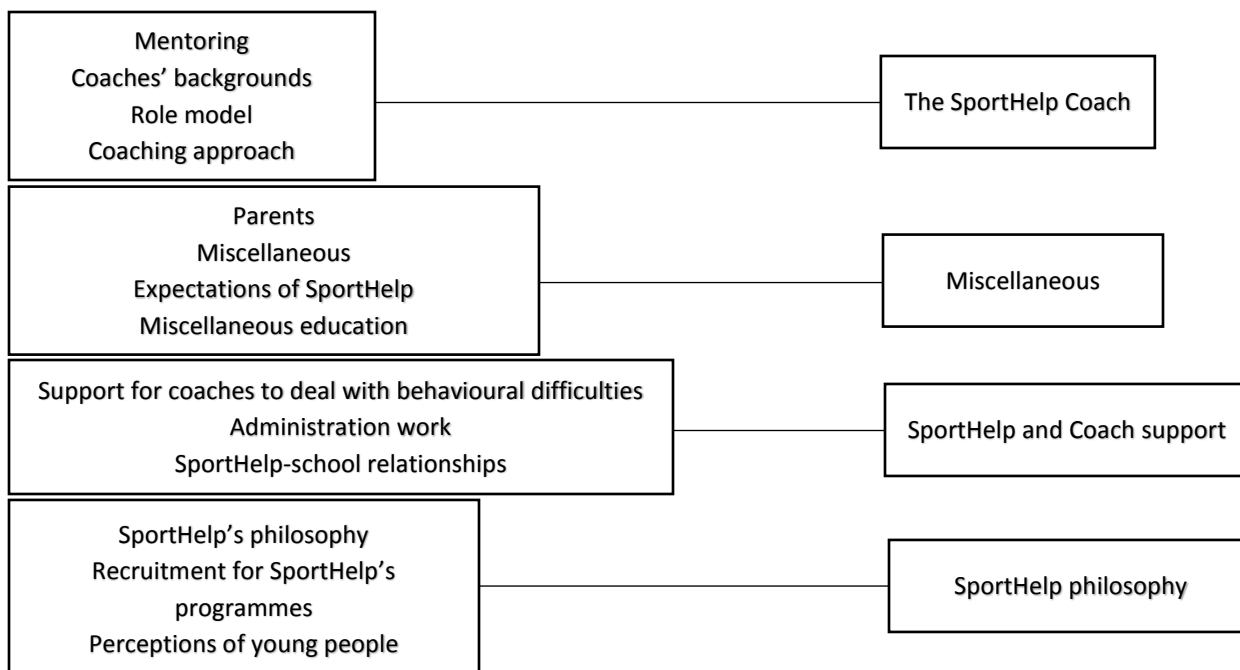
Manager themes (14):



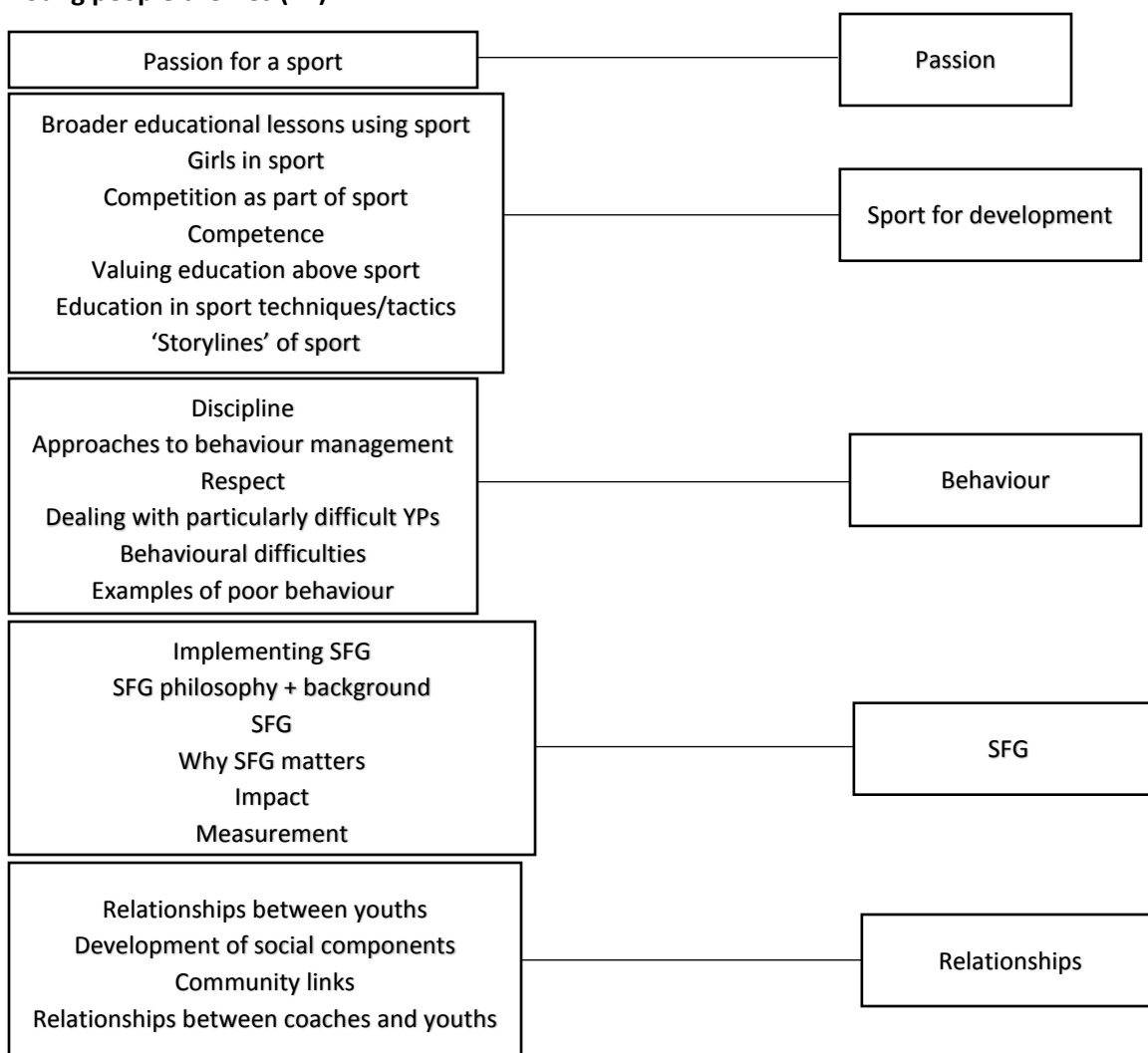


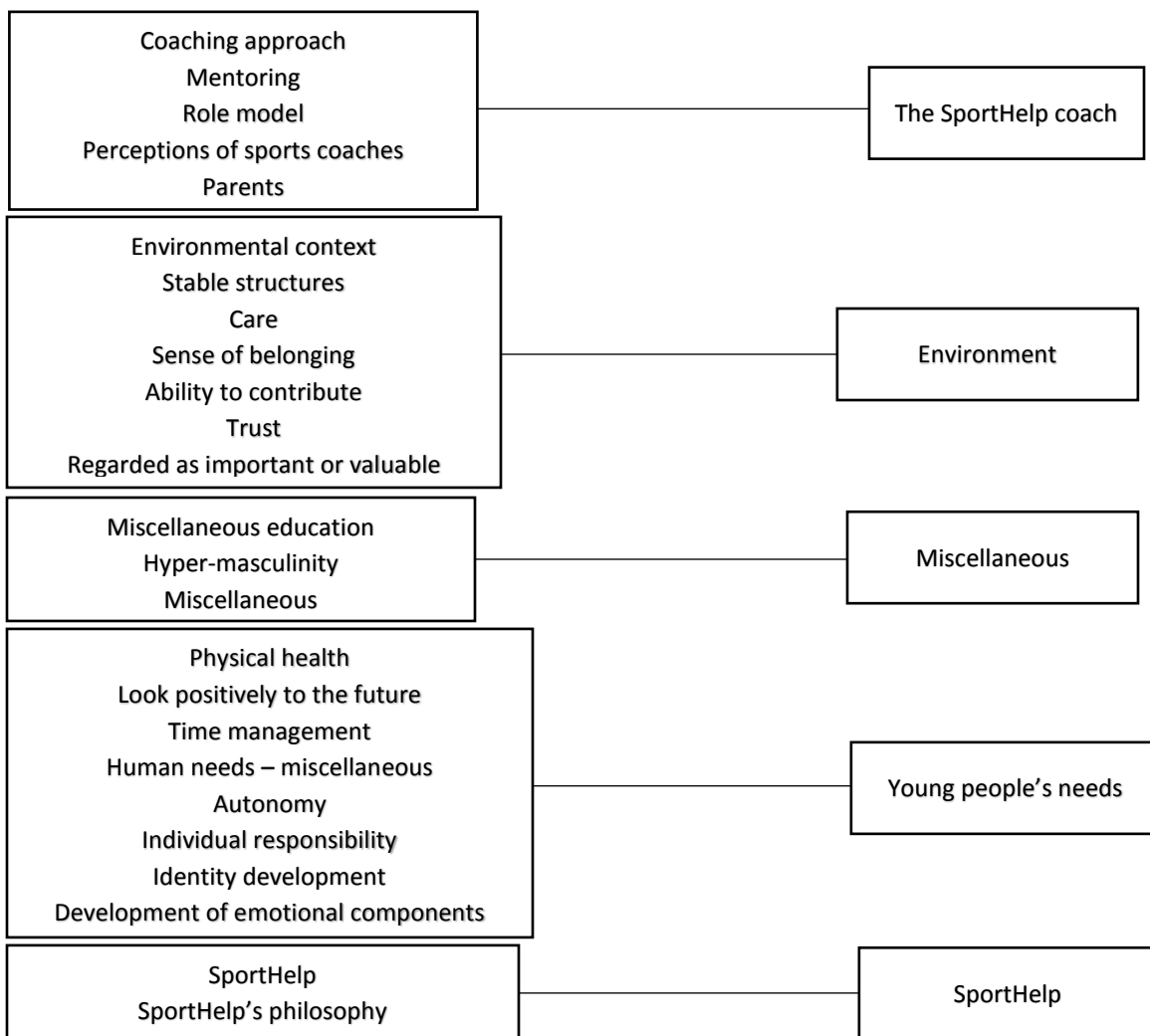
Coach themes (11):





Young people themes (11):





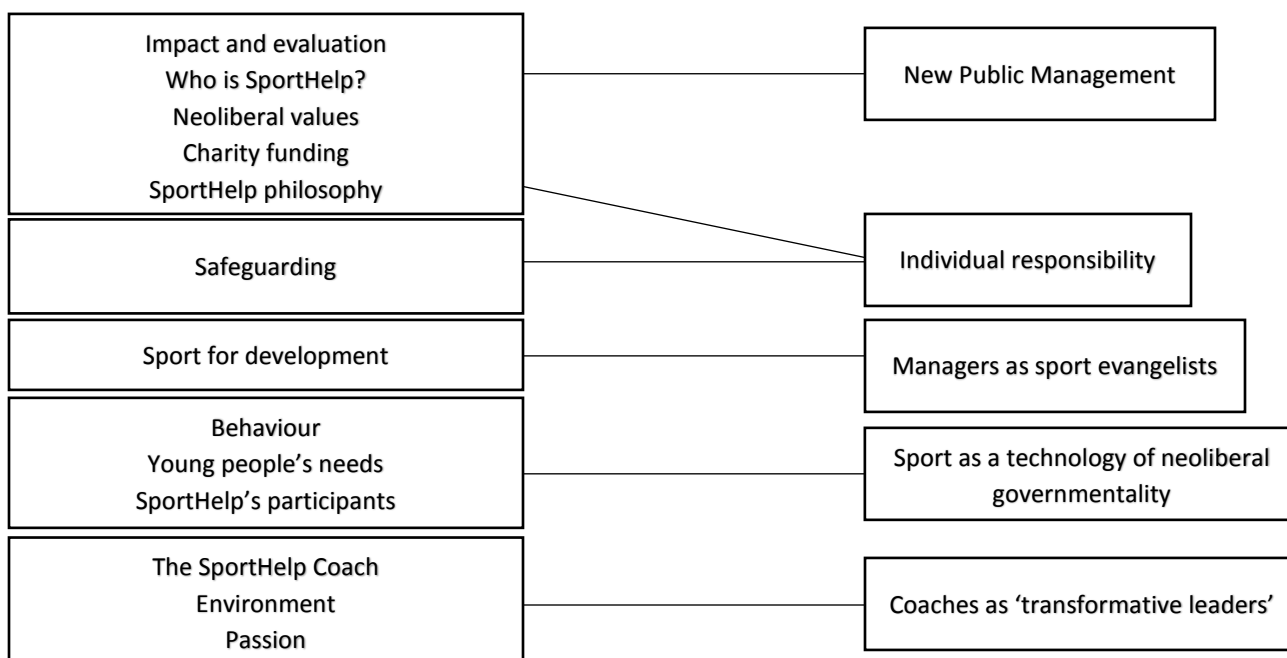
Iteration 6+7: Reduction from 36 to 17 themes based on how the themes overlap. For instance, ‘behaviour’ appeared three times (once for the managers, once for the coaches, and once for the young people). Instead of having three ‘behaviour’ themes, I compressed it into one.

Theme	Managers	Coaches	Young People
Impact and Evaluation			
Who is SportHelp?			
Neoliberal Values			
Charity Funding			
Sport for Development			
Behaviour			
Young People’s Needs			
SportHelp’s Participants			
Environment			
The SportHelp Coach			
Safeguarding			
Passion			
Relationships			
STEP			
SportHelp Philosophy			
SportHelp and Coach Support			
SportHelp			

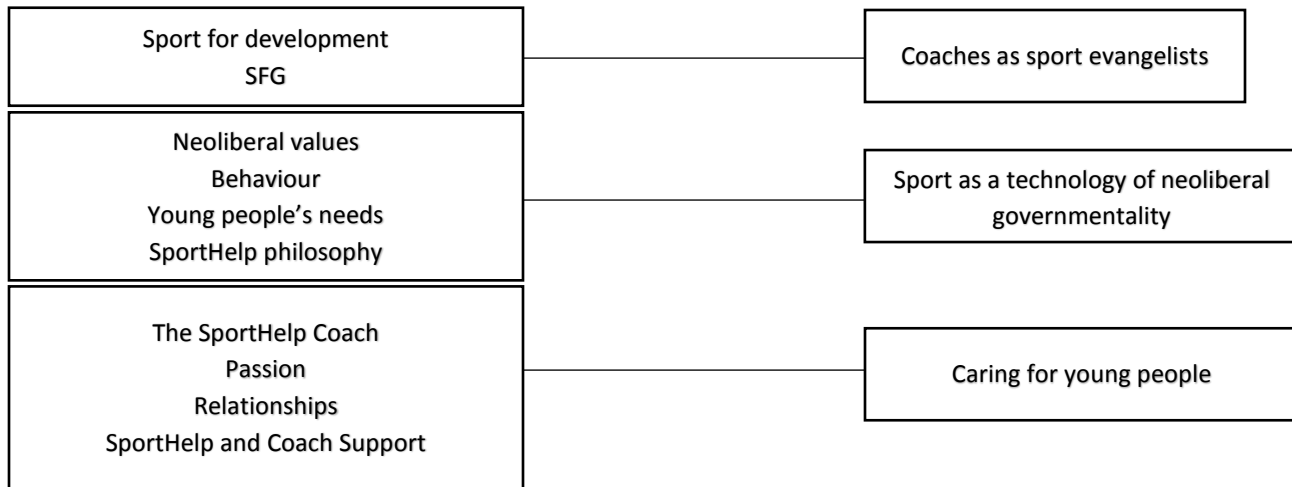
Iteration 8+9: The observations. I used the 17 themes outlined above; the only two themes that were not applicable to my observation data were ‘SportHelp’ and ‘Charity funding’.

Iteration 10: Refining the 17 themes into the final 11 themes. Note some of the 17 themes (on the left) are ‘repeated’.

Managers:



Coaches:



Young people:

